

# THE WEIGHT OF CULTURE IN NATION BUILDING

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General Studies

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## ABSTRACT

THE WEIGHT OF CULTURE IN NATION BUILDING, by Major R. Bryan Christensen, 97 pages.

The United States (US) has conducted nation building in nearly every conflict in which it has been involved. Some of these endeavors, such as Japan and Germany, were successful. Others have been less so. Although the reasons for success or failure are myriad, how important is it for the occupying force to understand the culture of the society that is occupied, and how can this understanding affect the outcome?

Iraqi culture is radically different from the US and so it becomes an easy scapegoat for any apparent lack of progress by attributing it to a fundamental misunderstanding of Iraqi culture. Successful nation building in a culture that is very distant from the US is not without precedent. This work analyzes the US occupation of Japan, a nation culturally distant from the US, as a case study to discover what went right and what can be applied to Iraq. RAND offers case studies where cultural understanding appears to play a minor role in the final outcome. There are numerous aspects of the US occupation of Japan, however, that were obviously designed to specifically target Japanese culture and to change it. Culture is important, but the question is how important and at what levels.

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## ACRONYMS

GHQ	General Headquarters
IDV	Individualism
LTO	Long-Term Orientation
MAS	Masculinity
PDI	Power Distance Index
SCAP	Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers
UAI	Uncertainty Avoidance Index
UN	United Nations
US	United States

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The United States (US) possesses the military might necessary to impose its will on virtually any adversary, but it is equally clear that this, usually, is not the correct approach to achieve long-term success. How the US pursues its national interests must also be evaluated in terms of the target nation's or group's culture which it wishes to influence. Cultural ignorance about adversaries, as well as allies, can severely impede US goals and interests. Though the US has the military power to force its desired outcome, should it? The answer is "no" if there are viable alternatives that not only save lives and treasure but ultimately can be more successful. What other options are available to achieve long-term success? Is this long-term approach feasible in an American society that is impatient and often lacks a long-term, strategic attention span?

The US is currently engaged in nation building in Iraq. This is not the first time the US has undertaken such an enormous task in a country with a culture vastly different from its own. The US occupied both Japan and Germany for many years after World War II. It established new governments and successfully influenced the respective cultures in such a way that prevented future conflict. The US, in these two cases, was successful as both nations became economic marvels as well as peaceful, stable allies. To compare the occupation of Iraq to that of Germany would not be fair since both share a common Western culture and many US citizens have German heritage (The 2000 U.S. Census revealed over 15 percent of Americans claim German ancestry, the largest group by far in the census, nearly double those claiming Mexican or even African ancestry) (Brittingham and de la Cruz 2004). This was not the case with Japan and yet the military occupation

succeeded. This thesis will use Japan as a case study to examine what can be learned about bridging a cultural divide as an occupying force and what can usefully be applied to operations today.

Culture is a complex subject to study and presents numerous problems, many unforeseen, for US forces. The US government has often been guilty of cultural ignorance and because of its military preeminence, sometimes gets involved militarily before fully considering the culture of a given region and the limitations this may impose on operations. If cultural factors are important for ultimate success, then the military must thoroughly evaluate the culture and integrate this understanding into every level of planning and risk analysis. Some may argue that Iraqi culture is too different from American culture and that this divide could preclude American success there. If one looks at the US experience in Japan, however, a culture that is vastly different from the US does not necessarily present an insurmountable obstacle.

Culture is an extraordinarily deep field with as many opinions as there are cultures. It will, therefore, be necessary to undertake a study of culture itself to serve as a foundation for analysis of the US current situation. The author will attempt to define culture and illuminate the dense, complex nature of culture and how to comprehend its importance and effects. There are numerous opportunities for mistakes if the US remains culturally ignorant. There are also missed opportunities for solving crises short of military action that pass by unseen.

Contrary to today's prevailing image, much of the Iraqi population did in fact herald the US as liberator during the initial phase of the occupation. This period of goodwill unfortunately dissipated fairly quickly, and was replaced by a long period of

violence directed not only toward US personnel, but amongst the different Iraqi ethnic and sectarian groups as well. The question is whether that initial good will could have been sustained if the US had obtained a thorough understanding of Iraqi culture before the commencement of combat operations. By not controlling the looting, for example, did the US show weakness in the minds of the Iraqis, thereby encouraging more lawlessness? Or, by disbanding the Iraqi military, did the US unwittingly shame thousands of Iraqi officers and turn them against the occupation? By looking at how the US occupation was carried out in Japan, the author will identify lessons that can be applied to Iraq, which in turn can provide guidance on how best to move forward, or how to prevent mistakes in the future.

#### Primary Research Question:

Is the US so culturally distant from Iraq that it cannot be effective in nation building there?

#### Secondary Research Questions

1. What is culture?
  - a. How can it be analyzed? Classified?
  - b. What weight does it have in international conflict?
  - c. Can it be changed by outside manipulation?
2. How do others view the US differently from how it views itself?
3. What did the US learn from the post World War II occupation of Japan that applies today?

4. Is cultural understanding important in nation building? If not, what is?
5. Is democracy possible in Iraq?

### Assumptions

Cultural analysis is only one of many tools that can support strategic military planning. However, a thorough understanding of culture alone does not automatically translate into military success. Some differences will arise that cannot be bridged because the opposing cultures have opposite or competing world views. There will be many instances where the US will have to accept that fact and not waste time and energy being frustrated at why it can not achieve the desired goals through consensus. It will be necessary to find alternative solutions. The only exception is if the objective in question is of such vital importance to US security that it trumps excessive deference toward cultural differences. Yet even in such circumstances, the US should be cautious about discounting cultural factors, for it will always play a role.

Leaders should also not assume the US can ever achieve complete cultural understanding of any nation it wishes to influence. Even if that were possible, they should not assume that this heightened understanding would then reveal the ideal solution for success. Culture is too complex of a system to be rendered into simple answers, especially when one speaks of how to manipulate or change that culture.

### Limitations

The study of culture and military intervention is limited to a series of “what-if” scenarios. One cannot turn back time and try a different approach to see what the outcome would have been. It is easy to point out mistakes made, or to find possible

reasons for past failures. However, it can not be proven whether these mistakes, if prevented at the time, would have ultimately changed the outcome. What is done is done and one often can only theorize as to the causes. Did Japan succeed as a result of cultural reforms imposed on it by the US, or were the Japanese simply ready for a change after the war? Would it have become pacified of its own accord?

### Delimitations

This study is focused at the strategic level of discourse and the effects of culture on those decisions with specific consideration of the implications for military involvement. As such, it will not consider things such as service culture among the military departments or other areas below the strategic level.

Language is a significant factor in shaping how people see and interpret the world, but one which would require a separate study to fully develop. For example, there is no exact translation in German for the term “deterrence.” The term used, *Abschreckung*, does not express exactly the same meaning as it does in English, and has a slightly sinister connotation. It is not hard to imagine how such a fundamental and well-understood principle of US strategic policy could end up being misinterpreted in another language that must devise its own method of translating it, and does so imperfectly. Other than acknowledging its significance to culture, the author will not examine the effects of language in this study.

### Key Terms

The following definitions establish a baseline for the work to follow. Components of these definitions are drawn from multiple sources, but they are essentially the author’s

definitions of the specified terms and clarify how they should be understood throughout the work.

Culture. “The values, attitudes, beliefs, orientations, and underlying assumptions prevalent among people in a society” (Harrison and Huntington 2001, xv).

Cultural Awareness. A combination of cultural literacy and cultural sensitivity. What is meant is not sensitivity in the politically correct sense of the word, but rather, instead of mere knowledge of the customs, history, and outward expressions of a given culture, one is able to sense the deeper meanings behind how members of that culture behave and think. One is able to recognize the cultural motivations underpinning certain behaviors and is able to also understand how one’s own culture interacts with the foreign culture.

Cultural Literacy. Knowledge of the customs, history, and values of a given culture to a degree that one can effectively differentiate between different cultures.

Instrumental Motivation. Motivation based on a direct reward, often economic.

Intrinsic Motivation. Motivation that comes from within the actor and is not altered by success or the lack thereof.

Liberalism. In contrast to realism, liberalism holds that nations are motivated not primarily by power, but that people are inherently good and stresses the freedom and protection of the individual. Government’s purpose is to protect and further the rights of individuals.

Realism. A political philosophy focused on power. Power is the driving force behind nation states and the realist view holds that the nation is motivated by its own national interests, foremost among which are autonomy and territorial integrity.

### Anticipated Problems

Two problems present themselves immediately in this type of study. First is the subjective nature of cultural analysis. Talking about culture means talking about people, their beliefs, thoughts, intents, and values. It is extremely difficult to discern the difference between reality and perception, either on the part of the subject under study or on the part of the researcher as well, for the researcher is forced to translate what he or she observes in this foreign culture into something his or her own culture can understand. All along that continuum exist numerous places where the researcher must fill in the gaps in understanding as best as he or she can by making assumptions that may not always be valid.

Second is that the matter under study is so complex and varied. It is possible virtually always to find at least one, or perhaps several, individual examples to support any analytical approach. Caution must, therefore, be taken so as to not over-generalize findings to the target population as a whole based on limited data. Although broad trends and tendencies can be discerned, it is probably unwise to try and distill overly specific guidance from general observations.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Current World Setting and Its Origins

Differences in culture will always play an important factor in any foreign involvement by the US. Unfortunately, owing to the US' status as the lone superpower, it often suffers from ignorance of other cultures since its own has become so pervasive around the globe. This superpower status is not only real, but is reinforced everywhere Americans may travel. American-born chains from McDonalds to Starbucks can be found the world over and so even when traveling abroad, the US citizen is continually reaffirmed in his perceived status at the top. The overwhelming dominance of American culture handicaps its citizens when attempting to see issues through the cultural prism of other nations and ethnic groups. Americans take their success as evidence of the rightness of their culture and feel little incentive to study others. This is starkly illustrated by the limited study of foreign languages among US students as compared with just about anywhere else in the world where foreign language study, often English, is compulsory.

This cultural ignorance can have significant repercussions, particularly in military operations. Ignorance may lead the US military to become involved in a situation prematurely or go in unprepared to handle the effects of culture. It can also limit the ability of leaders to recognize other solutions short of military force. America's intervention in Iraq has been hampered by numerous factors, among them a lack of understanding of Arab culture. The military has made a significant effort in recent years to bridge this divide and better train its Soldiers in Iraqi culture so it can operate more effectively. There have been extreme views expressed in the media and government that



have postulated that democracy is perhaps simply incompatible with Islam. This discounts the progress made by Turkey, however, which is a significant departure from other Islamic-based countries in the region. Though Turkey is certainly not a democracy on the same level as Western Europe or the US, it is undeniable evidence that some form of democratic government is possible in Arab society. Comments about the futility of democracy in Iraq shed light on US naïveté if it assumes that the western concept of liberal democracy can be transplanted directly to other cultures without significant effort or that the end result will be a mirror image of itself.

### A Growing Divide

The Global War on Terror has thrown into stark relief the cultural divide between the US and many of its allies. The new world order that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union, leaving the US as the lone superpower, gave rise to an increase in and espousal of liberalism by the Europeans, in contrast to the realism of the US. Luxembourg foreign minister Jacques Poos stated in the summer of 1991, “This is the hour of Europe; this is not the hour of the Americans” (Mihalka 2001, 7). Although clearly an overstatement, the Europeans have held tight to this belief even in spite of their failure to control the situation in the Balkans without US military help. Kagan, in *Paradise and Power*, conducts a detailed analysis of the reasons for this divergence of thought between the US and Europe. His basic premise is that Europe, under the protective military umbrella of the US, has had the luxury of not worrying about stability or external threats since World War II. Since World War II, it has mostly been relieved of the burden of expensive defense budgets as the US filled that void. A much greater emphasis on diplomacy has taken root, supplanting an over reliance on military force to

achieve desired results. Europe has been allowed to conduct its affairs under the protection of the US and has enjoyed an unprecedented period of peace and progress since the war. As a result, Europe has perhaps naively concluded that its success since that time has come about primarily through economic and diplomatic forces at work. This has fostered the liberal viewpoint of many Europeans who have taken for granted the protection of the US and do not realize that their world was only made possible while contained within the defensive perimeter established by the US (Kagan 2003, 18, 37).

During this same period, the US continued to invest heavily in defense and had to deal constantly with the threat of the Soviet Union and nuclear annihilation. This led to a much more realist approach where power is the currency of international relations. That power often comes from military might and state interaction revolves around security and survival. Kagan explains that the consequence of the US experience--and what he sees as its realist view--is to likely rely more on the military and less on diplomacy and economics to further its national interests. If Kagan is right, this leaves the US vulnerable to criticism from both enemies and allies that its version of diplomacy is nothing more than gunboat diplomacy, with over reliance on the former instead of the latter. This view is summed up by the oft-repeated caricature of President George W. Bush as a cowboy.

When one tries to find a role for culture analysis in this interplay between states, however, there are deficiencies in the framework on both sides. Realism, with its emphasis on power and the state, views the world as a collection of nations who operate more or less according to the same rules with the same goals and the only thing that distinguishes them from each other is their relative power. It also assumes that states behave rationally. The problem is that it does not account for the enormous diversity that

in fact exists, or that different cultures will sometimes act in ways that contradict what one would term rational behavior.

Kevin Avruch, Professor of Conflict Resolution and Anthropology at George Mason University, discusses culture's origins and impacts at length in his book, *Culture and Conflict Resolution*. In it, he asserts that realism suppresses individuality, and if a realist does acknowledge the effect of culture, he, at best, will relegate it to a distant secondary role because all things are trumped by power (Avruch 1998, 28). This overemphasis on power--and not accounting for culture--is usually short-sighted. Edmund Burke recognized the limits of imposing one's will by force over 200 years ago when he said, "The use of force alone is but temporary. It may subdue for a moment; but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again: and a nation is not governed, which is perpetually to be conquered" (Avruch 1998, 49). One of the fatal flaws in realism is failure to understand that underwriting real power is legitimacy, and legitimacy is inextricably bound to culture (1998, 54).

Liberalism too has its shortcomings when it comes to analyzing culture and its effects. Avruch asserts that realism itself could be labeled as a cultural phenomenon that only came into primacy after World War II as a consequence of liberalism's failure during the interwar period to set conditions to prevent another war (Avruch 1998, 34). Liberalism assumes an innate desire for the common good that emanates from basic human nature. This fundamental premise suppresses individuality and assumes a greater commonality among nations and peoples than is probably the case. "In its liberal, utopian guise, idealism replaces the realist's will to dominate with the will to cooperate. Once

again, the effect is to eradicate differences in favor of sameness--and culture is about difference” (Avruch 1998, 29).

In summary, both liberalism and realism are inadequate to the task of seeing and understanding culture completely. The problem is that people on both sides are so entrenched in their own tradition that they effectively go about with blinders on that prevent them from understanding the opposing viewpoint. This is detrimental to all sides. There are also negative implications for the US military since it can divide allies and thereby weaken the US global position. This in turn robs the military of legitimacy in its mission and emboldens its enemies.

### What Is Culture?

The study of culture has evolved over the past 150 years. During the nineteenth century, culture was looked at from three different perspectives. The first defined culture by the arts or intellectualism. Avruch equates this with today’s “high culture” as opposed to “pop culture” (Avruch 1998, 6). Culture was reserved for only a select slice of society. Other theorists developed a more all-encompassing definition of culture defining it as possessed by every group of people, and categorized along a spectrum ranging from savagery to barbarism to civilization. In 1870, another definition came from Edward Tylor in 1870, who described culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Avruch 1998, 6). In the midtwentieth century, a further definition emerged which recognized the distinctiveness of individual cultures among different peoples and groups. It also asserted a relativist view, rejecting values-based assessments of culture according to high and low or savage versus civilized (Avruch 1998, 7).

The first definition limiting culture to a select few is too limiting to be useful, for it is apparent that culture exists everywhere and no one group has a monopoly on it. The latter two definitions, one assuming a global culture and the other asserting cultures are so distinct as to hinder cross-cultural communication, are also not without problems. On one hand to assume a single, innate culture will surely lead to over-generalization and prevent the US from understanding both enemy and ally. On the other hand, to use the third definition would mean that there is little or no opportunity for an outsider to effectively communicate with or influence someone or some group belonging to another culture. If the US hopes to have any ability to promote its interests abroad, then it must assume a middle ground between these two theories. It must acknowledge the uniqueness of the cultures it encounters while at the same time trying to find ways to bridge the differences between each.

It is important to recognize that each of these definitions can be manipulated to achieve a desired political end. Avruch discusses how the first definition--some have culture while others do not--could have been used during the colonial era to justify taking over other, less-cultured states for the supposedly altruistic aim of civilizing them. The concept of the "white man's burden" invoked images of the wise, refined West lifting up the wretched, oppressed barbarians to give them a better life. One could easily draw parallels to today and in fact there is continuing rhetoric in the Islamic world against the US occupation of Iraq based precisely upon this view of culture. Though the US desires no colonies in the middle east of the model seen in past centuries, today's struggle could be characterized by some as no less than a cultural crusade of conquest.

If one subscribes to the second definition--that there is really a global “culture” with differing subsets--than one could, perhaps naively, assume it is possible to change a given culture with minimum effort. The third definition takes a much stricter stance and would advise against interfering with the cultural norms and practices of another, as cultures are more distinct than one may realize and any attempt to change it would likely fail.

Avruch goes on to specify some of the pitfalls of culture studies and groups these into six common mistakes researchers make when discussing culture. It is important to understand these hazards in order to correctly assess culture and its impact.

1. *Culture is homogenous.* This assumes there are no contradictions or strange behavior that can not be explained by cultural roots. It assumes a culture can be studied and understood by an outsider, to the effect that he or she will then be able to logically predict behavior of the cultural group.

2. *Culture is a thing.* By looking at culture as a “thing” it’s easy to ascribe power to it above and beyond the individual that can override the freedom of that individual. He or she is beholden to the culture. Avruch attributes this type of analysis to Huntington and implies that he takes it too far, without leaving enough room for the power of the individual to manipulate their cultural heritage to define themselves, instead of being defined by the culture.

3. *Culture is uniformly distributed among members of a group.* Groupings and classifications are helpful in understanding a culture, but it must not lead the researcher into presuming that these broad strokes will apply uniformly to all within the group.

4. *An individual possesses but a single culture.* Every person is a member of multiple groups, and can not be fully described by any one label. A person will typically behave differently around his or her parents versus friends, or in different settings such as the workplace versus church. Likewise each of these circles possesses their own unique cultural traits that are all manifested within the individual.

5. *Culture is custom.* Culture is more than mere tradition and rules of behavior.

6. *Culture is timeless.* Culture is not a static thing, but constantly changes and adapts to the world that surrounds it. (Avruch 1998, 14-16)

## Classifying Culture

Geert Hofstede is a widely cited researcher in classifying cultures and has developed a simple framework to compare cultures. He started with surveys conducted by a large corporation with worldwide presence, IBM. The survey data included numerous questions regarding personal values and these were administered in seventy countries at different times between 1967 and 1973. He initially conducted research using only the forty largest countries from the sample, but over time has extended his research outside of IBM to collect statistically significant data for seventy-four countries on people from a wide range of vocations and social status. After analyzing the data, Hofstede identified four core dimensions that describe different cultures. He added a fifth dimension to his model after discovering a new trend when examining data collected from China (Hofstede 2007).

The five dimensions in Hofstede's model are: Power Distance Index (PDI), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) and Long-Term Orientation (LTO).

Power Distance Index (PDI). This component is strong in societies that have a stratified social structure and demonstrate and expect deference to be shown between different levels of the society. It implies that power, whether political, economic or otherwise, is not evenly distributed among the population and that both those with and those without power accept this status quo. This understanding of power relationships is driven from the bottom and not from the top.

Individualism (IDV). Measures the relative worth of individuals versus the group or collectivism. In highly individualistic cultures people have loose ties to one another, as

opposed to collectivist societies in which they are tightly woven into strong groups, be they family or ethnic based. These groups demand loyalty and subordinate individual desires to the good of the group. Cultures that score high on IDV expect the individual to first look out for him or herself and their immediate family.

Masculinity (MAS). Addresses gender roles in a society. Hofstede discovered that women's values are much more stable across cultures than are men's. This continuum therefore measures the degree to which men's values in a given society differ from that of the women. The scale typically ranges from very assertive and competitive qualities in masculine cultures, to modest and caring values in cultures that are more feminine. In societies that are very masculine, women also tend to be more assertive and competitive, though not as much as the men, a significant gap still exist between the genders in those instances.

Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI). A measure of a culture's willingness to allow for change and its ability to deal with it when it occurs. Uncertainty about the future can lead to high levels of anxiety and evoke the feeling one lacks control. Societies with a high UAI tend to be very structured with extensive laws and rules designed to mitigate the effects of change and uncertainty as much as possible. Hofstede explains that this tolerance or intolerance for ambiguity "ultimately refers to a man's search for Truth" (Hofstede 2007). This touches on religion and philosophy and reveals cultures where people believe absolute truth exists and they possess it. This removes a large degree of uncertainty from their lives. Cultures with high UAI are often more emotional whereas cultures that are more comfortable in unstructured environments evince a greater



tolerance for differences. Low UAI cultures adopt a more relativist approach, allowing for multiple viewpoints to coexist while shying away from establishing too many rules.

Long-Term Orientation (LTO). This first became apparent to Hofstede when studying survey results from Chinese workers and is closely related to Confucian teachings of the far east, though this dimension is not limited exclusively to those countries where Confucianism is present. Cultures with a LTO value thrive and persevere. In contrast those with a short-term orientation believe in “respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one’s ‘face’” (Hofstede 2007). It should be noted that since this final dimension was not identified in the initial Hofstede studies, data has not been collected regarding LTO for all the countries surveyed, but only those examined since identifying this domain. To date LTO has been applied to twenty three different countries, the US and Japan included.

Since this work is concerned with identifying differences among cultures, a world average is not useful by itself since it reduces all cultures to a monochromatic picture, minimizing the wide range of differences. It is helpful to have a baseline in order to establish a reference point for comparison. The world averages for all five domains are listed in figure 1.

From figure 1, each category is roughly within plus or minus ten points of center on the scale, but it is noteworthy to see that UAI is elevated for a majority of the cultures surveyed. IDV is also displaced from the center, in this case lower. This is important to understand when considering individual cultures so one can assess whether or not they are similar to or diverge greatly from the majority of countries identified in the study.

US scores are depicted in figure 2.

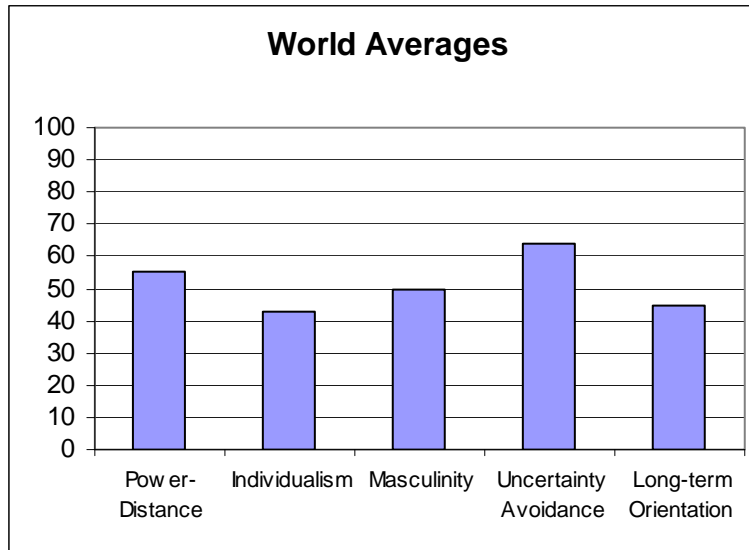


Figure 1. World Averages for Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions  
 Source: Geert H. Hofstede, *Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Resources*; available from [http://www.geert-hofstede.com:80/geert\\_hofstede\\_resources.shtml](http://www.geert-hofstede.com:80/geert_hofstede_resources.shtml); Internet; accessed on 12 March 2007.

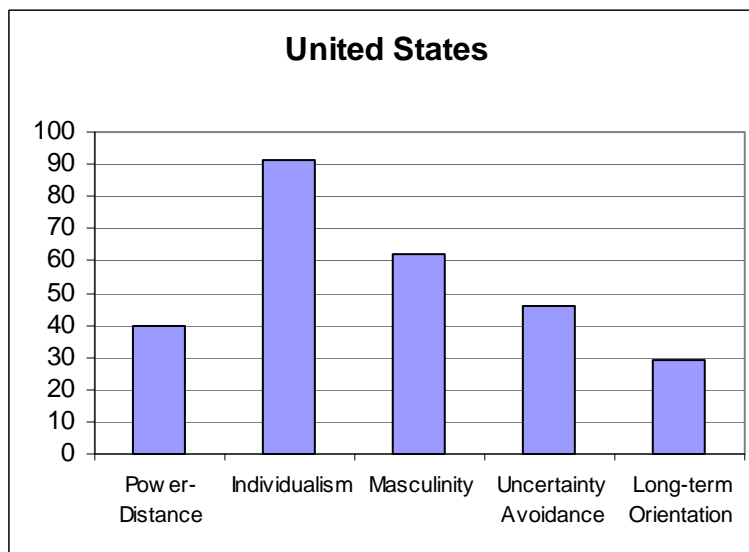


Figure 2. Hofstede Cultural Dimensions for the United States  
 Source: Geert H. Hofstede, *Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Resources*; available from [http://www.geert-hofstede.com:80/geert\\_hofstede\\_resources.shtml](http://www.geert-hofstede.com:80/geert_hofstede_resources.shtml); Internet; accessed on 12 March 2007.

One is immediately struck by the difference in the primacy of IDV as compared to the world average. Hofstede found only seven countries where IDV was the highest-ranked category of the five. They are all Western nations, and of those seven, the US has the highest score of all.

The US also has a below average rating for Power-Distance evidencing a culture of less formality in social relations and one where power is fairly evenly distributed. The remaining dimensions show that the US is short-term oriented tolerates uncertainty well and is also above average in terms of MAS.

The US scores contrast with those of Japan, which follow in figure 3.

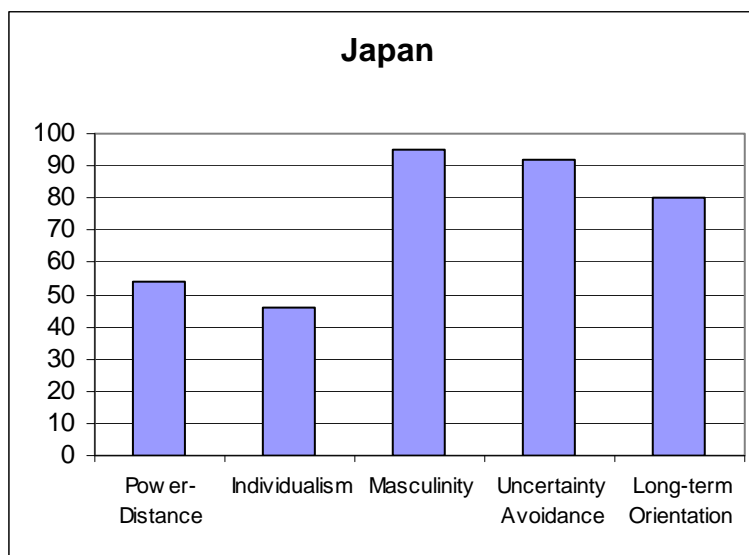


Figure 3. Hofstede Cultural Dimensions for Japan

Source: Geert H. Hofstede, *Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Resources*; available from [http://www.geert-hofstede.com:80/geert\\_hofstede\\_resources.shtml](http://www.geert-hofstede.com:80/geert_hofstede_resources.shtml); Internet; accessed on 12 March 2007.

Japanese culture has a strong score for MAS relative to the US and the world average. It also has a larger score for UAI and LTO and a low rating for IDV. The graph for Japan almost appears as the US inverse.

Also of interest to this study is Iraqi culture. Hofstede does not include Iraq as a separate data point, but does have scores for the Arab world in general. The composite scores depicted in figure 4 represent an average across Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

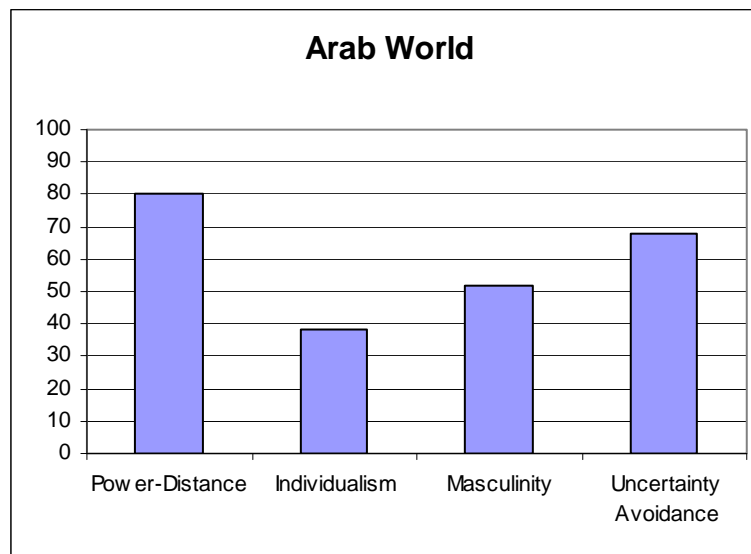


Figure 4. Hofstede Cultural Dimensions for the Arab World

Source: Geert H. Hofstede, *Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Resources*; available from [http://www.geert-hofstede.com:80/geert\\_hofstede\\_resources.shtml](http://www.geert-hofstede.com:80/geert_hofstede_resources.shtml); Internet; accessed on 12 March 2007.

Arab culture has a high PDI score that also seems to correspond to a low IDV score. The score for MAS is greater in the US than the Arab world even though women have far greater rights in the latter than they do in Arab countries. This will be discussed

later in this same chapter. Arab countries were not included in the twenty-three evaluated for LTO so that data is omitted.

### Cultural Norms

As part of classifying different cultures, there are studies on specific cultural practices or attitudes that distinguish one group from another. There are cultural norms that exist in every culture that are used by members of that society to define their likes and dislikes, what they hold dear, and what are their preferences or predispositions. VanOttan examined the impact of cultural differences between American and Muslim-Arab culture in Iraq and Afghanistan. He lists several cultural norms where American and Arab and Muslim societies view the world nearly opposite from each other (2005, 31-34). An examination of these differences helps to vividly illustrate the challenges faced by the US in working with and trying to change Iraqi culture.

### Gender Roles

In Western cultures, women are accepted as part of the workforce and are expected to compete with men as well as performing as wife and mother. In contrast, in Islamic society, women are not allowed so prominent a role. Women are subordinate to their husbands in particular and to men in general and are largely confined to roles within the home. This divergent view of women can create friction when US forces, which include women working side by side with male counterparts, arrive and attempt to operate in a society that does not allow the same freedoms for both sexes.

It is interesting here to analyze the reasons behind the different roles for women in both societies. Hofstede showed that the US actually scored higher on the MAS

dimension than did countries in the Arab world, which seems counterintuitive. How can a society that places so many legal restrictions on women (Arab countries) really be “less” male oriented in its culture than one that affords equal rights to the sexes?

In light of the Hofstede data, it seems the US is culturally more male dominated than the Arab world; but how to explain then the different rights and roles of women between the two? When comparing them, it is possible the real reason for the disparate treatment of women is not found in a different view of gender roles. Instead, it could be found in how each culture views individual rights and power distance. In a culture such as the US that champions IDV so strongly and devalues power distance, a culture of MAS is not permitted to express itself fully since it would conflict with the greater value of IDV through infringing on the rights of others. IDV and the protection of basic rights trump the cultural tendency toward MAS and it is thus kept in check. In Arab society by contrast, there are fewer inhibitions against limiting individual rights and combined with a strong PDI, the MAS dimension is allowed to attain official sanction and legal enforcement, though the underlying culture is perhaps not so different from the US. The ability to outwardly express that cultural norm could be where the difference actually lies.

This illustrates the difficulty in accurately evaluating culture and divining its sources. Models such as Hofstede’s are excellent tools to try and break it down into understandable parts, but it is easy to get too one dimensional in the analysis and not comprehend the interaction between the domains and how one affects the other.

### Aging

Advanced age does not receive the same level of respect and deference in Western culture as it does in the Arab world. American culture generally places greater

importance on ability versus seniority. In Arab culture, this dynamic is reversed, and the most senior members of a group are accorded the greatest degree of deference. This inevitably leads to conflicts between US forces, comprised largely of young officers, who are tasked with controlling and directing indigenous populations led by local elders.

### Authority and Social Status

Determining exactly who the authorities are in a given culture can be a challenge when confronted with a culture different from one's own. Social status may be driven by age, family ties, ethnic group, or, as in American culture, wealth, beauty, and position (VanOttten 2005, 33). It varies from group to group and must be understood if one culture intends to be successful in interaction with another.

### Time and Time Consciousness

Americans are very conscious of time and the language is replete with expressions to not "waste" time or that "time is money" and similar phrases (Kohls 2006). Arab culture takes a different attitude to time and is by no means unique in its approach. Arabs are not as concerned with punctuality, nor are they driven by a self-imposed pressure to "get things done" as is found in American culture (VanOttten 2005, 33). This can be frustrating for US servicemen tasked to work in Arab societies where their counterparts do not appear for meetings at the prearranged time and are more concerned with interpersonal relationships and etiquette than methodically working through items on an agenda. If an American is unaware of the Arab understanding of time, they will likely take offense and assume a negative view of Arabs.

### Future Orientation

Closely related to time is how a culture views the future. Americans are always looking toward the future and generally live by the maxim that “things will always get better” (Kohls 2006). This perpetual optimism about the future is in part driven by a belief that individuals can exert control over their environment. Both of these cultural norms run counter to Arab culture however (Kohls 2006). In Muslim society, it would be considered futile to be overly concerned with the future, which relates to the strongly held religious belief that all is in God’s hands. If something is to happen or not, it will occur because it is God’s will and not because a mortal influenced it to be so. In fact, to actively try to control one’s future could even be considered sinful in Muslim culture, as it potentially pits an individual’s will against God’s.

### Right and Wrong

To an American, right and wrong are clear, or American culture at least prefers that there be an obvious line between the two. Americans find it difficult to understand cultures that differ on something that to them seems so basic. For example, when an agreement is made between two parties, an American will expect it to be kept. VanOttan interjects an example from Japanese culture which allows for items to be changed after the fact and does not feel locked into the prior agreement. Another example is nepotism, which is generally viewed negatively in American culture. This stands in contrast to tribal cultures where the exact opposite is true. Indeed it would be highly unusual and offensive to not give preference to one’s family over that of a foreigner or non-relative (VanOttan 2005, 34). Once again, this challenges American views where competition and reward based on merit are praised and to reward a less qualified person due solely to family



relationships would be considered unethical. In short, Americans must be prepared for the reality that what they view as right and wrong is not nearly so absolute across cultures.

### Logic and Emotion

Every culture defines its own balance between logic and emotion. Some, like American culture, rely on logic and reason when making a decision and try to remove emotion from the situation. In other cultures, emotion or tradition may play a larger role. Some may base their world-view on ancient cultural traditions that are accepted within the culture as a matter of faith (VanOtten 2005, 34). Understanding the relative weight of logic versus emotion in a foreign culture can be like learning an entirely new language.

### Communication Styles and Body Language

If the differences in values and traditions were not enough, the methods one employs to communicate present another area of diversity with its own challenges. Some cultures are more reserved in speech and body language than others. Some, such as Americans, prefer a certain amount of personal space and become uncomfortable when it is violated. Those who use a lot of gesturing and expressive body language in their communication become likewise uneasy when speaking with someone from Japanese culture for example, which is much more subtle and restrained. They may wonder whether the other side is bored or even listening, and the more reserved side may be offended by what they perceive as an ostentatious and undisciplined display of emotion.

### Culture Classified By State

One of the leading researchers in culture is Samuel Huntington, who stirred up debate with *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. His analysis of

culture goes further in a collaborative work with Lawrence Harrison entitled *Culture Matters*. This collection of articles analyzes the reasons behind disparities among nations with similar opportunities for success (climate, natural resources, and others), but who show very different levels of progress. Often the cultures in these respective nations differ greatly. Huntington asserts that there are values that encourage progress and those that hinder it. From this assertion, he seeks to explain why two countries which outwardly are very similar can have very different outcomes. One is successful while the other remains impoverished and unstable. Huntington concedes that culture is not the sole reason for these different results, but he asserts it does play a major role, perhaps even the decisive role, in determining the direction a nation or ethnic group will take. This approach is viewed as heretical by others in the field, since it requires that the researcher make judgments about the relative merit culture.

Huntington distinguishes between civilizations, which can encompass multiple nations, and nations themselves, and has defined categories for both. He uses the term “core” state as a way of selecting certain countries that are powerful and dominant enough to form a nucleus around which similar countries or cultures can be grouped. Huntington defines two core states for Western civilization, the US and a European core of France and Germany. Great Britain lies somewhere in the middle. According to Huntington, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America all suffer from the absence of a core state. Though each region contains members that could potentially fill that role, the myriad of differences that exist, whether religious, linguistic, or otherwise, prevent any one state from asserting a dominant role in those regions (Huntington 2003, 135-136).

Presumably this makes these regions slightly less stable since they are somewhat adrift; each forced to find its own way.

“Lone” states are those that are very isolated culturally, making them unique. The reasons for isolation may be religious, linguistic, geographic, or others, but the effect is that there are few if any similarities to other nations. Huntington cites Haiti, Ethiopia, and Japan as examples. To illustrate, when Haiti was in crisis in 1994, many Latin American countries who had accepted Cuban refugees would not do the same for those from Haiti, refusing to recognize Haiti as a fellow Latin American country (Huntington 2003, 136). Though Catholicism is the predominant religion, it has been adapted and integrated with local customs and beliefs over the years such as Voodoo, making it a different form of Catholicism from that found in the rest of Latin America. Haiti’s language (French) and roots also differ from its Caribbean and Latin American neighbors, making the culture distinct from others in the same region.

The next category from Huntington is “cleft” countries. These have elements of multiple civilizations within their borders, and if the divisions are deep enough, it can lead to separation such as was the case in Austro-Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and perhaps Canada (Huntington 2003, 137). Cleft countries are particularly vulnerable to civil strife and instability due to these contrasting cultures that are forced to repeatedly rub against each other. Iraq is another prime example of a cleft country.

Huntington introduces a final classification of a “torn” country, which will be elaborated upon further when considering the possibility of changing the culture of a given group.

### Differing World Views

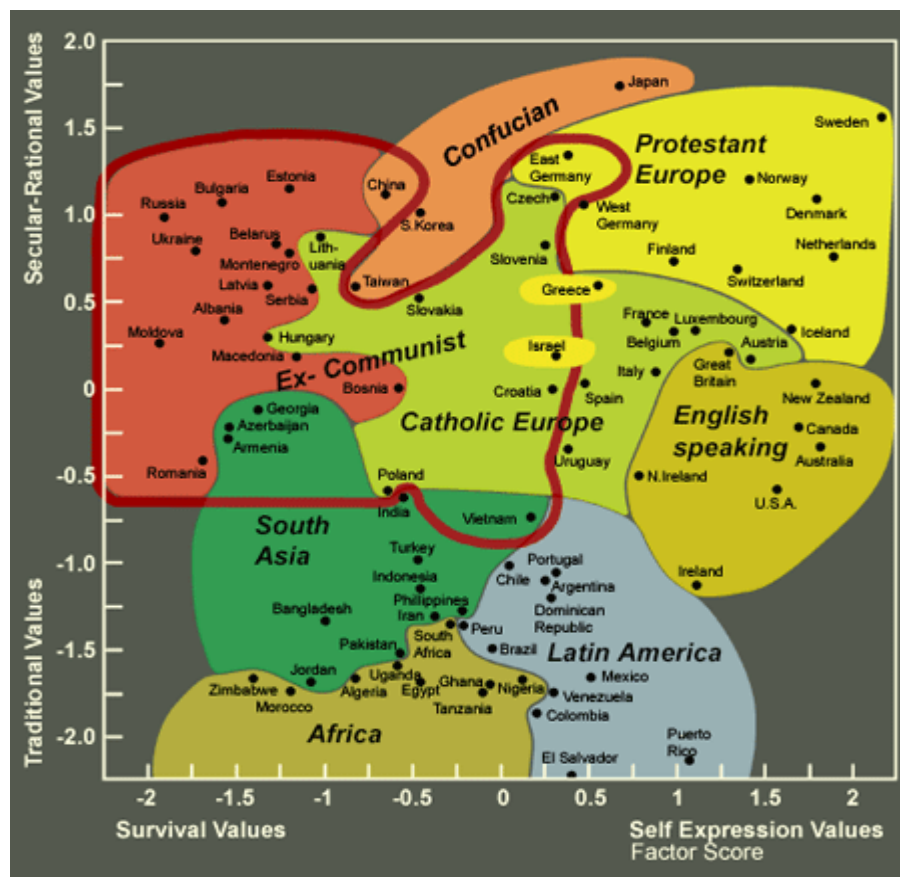
The World Values Survey looks at how the values of varying nations and societies change over time, and provides another tool for comparison across different cultures. The project is run by a worldwide association of social scientists at multiple universities and is currently chaired by Professor Ronald Inglehart of the University of Michigan. They have reduced culture analysis to two basic dimensions: traditional versus secular-rational values and survival versus self-expression values.

The first measures the degree to which a society values religion or not. This may seem overly simplistic, but the researchers have been able to correlate a host of other values with religion so it is their contention that this dimension is reflective of other cultural traits at the same time and not just religion. Those societies that are more traditional evidence greater power-distance emphasize clear standards and family bonds and reject things like divorce. They are also very nationalistic. All of these attributes are the reverse in secular societies.

The second dimension is an indirect measure of society's relative wealth. Poorer countries typically exhibit more of a survival mode mentality while wealthier societies, unencumbered by excessive worry about survival, turn to self-expression values. Thus as a society progresses in wealth, it moves from focusing on economic and physical security toward well being and quality of life.

Over the present study's duration, researchers identified a clear trend in most industrialized nations that shows movement from the traditional towards the secular. This shift is not linear, however, though the two dimensions do appear to correlate. That is as a society rises in wealth it does not necessarily move toward secularism at the same rate.

Once a certain economic level is attained and the society is fully industrialized and transitions to a knowledge society, then the move away from traditional values and towards secularism begins (Inglehart 2007).



From the graph in figure 5, the US population is close to the center between traditional versus secular-rational values and has a very strong score for self-expression. Examine how the US scores relate to Japan as well as to Islamic countries. In each case there are similarities as well as differences.

The US and Japan are relatively close on the scale for survival self-expression and far apart on the traditional-secular scale. Both societies score positively for self-expression with the US scoring somewhat higher. In contrast, there is divergence between the two on the importance of religion with Japan scoring the highest of those nations surveyed for a secular-rational orientation.

In comparison to Islamic countries, the correlation is somewhat reversed. The US is far apart from all Islamic countries listed on the survival self expression scale. On the traditional versus secular-rational scale, it is close to some Islamic countries, such as Indonesia and Iran. This result is not uniform and the US is significantly displaced on this scale from other Muslim nations, such as Jordan, Algeria, and Egypt on this dimension.

The implications for the present study are two-fold. First, it is possible to find common ground even among cultures that appear outwardly to be very distant. Secondly, what works for the US in working with one culturally distant society, like Japan, may not work or may even be counterproductive when applying the same approach to another culturally distant society, such as Iraq. It implies that the US must determine not just that this cultural distance exists, but must examine what causes it so it uses the correct approach.

A few examples of not understanding different cultural viewpoints illustrate the hazards involved. Avruch discusses how Israel used disproportionate force to respond to

Egyptian attacks during the 1950s and 1960s. The cultural view of Israel is that the nation is closely tied to the West and believes in deterrence. If one punishes an enemy ruthlessly for the slightest infraction, that enemy will eventually decide the price of such action is too costly to bear and will be deterred from further attacks. This did not happen for Israel in this example.

Egyptian culture has its own culturally based view of vengeance, retribution, and the use of violence, and closely connected to these is a belief in proportionality. When Israel responded with such disproportionate reprisals, it was humiliating for the Egyptians and resulted, in their culture, in a loss of honor. This sense of honor is paramount in Arab culture and the only path available to them for restoring the loss was further attacks. Thus the Israeli solution of deterrence, grounded in their world-view of costs-benefits analysis, did not translate into Arab culture and served only to perpetuate the cycle (Avruch 1998, 54-55). Power is not always enough.

Parallels can be drawn to the US response to Libya in the 1980s. President Ronald Reagan assumed that Libyan President Muammar Qaddafi was a puppet for the Soviet Union and sought an opportunity to confront him and neutralize or eliminate the threat he posed. To that end, the US conducted naval exercises in the Mediterranean, purposefully entering Libyan claimed territorial waters in the Gulf of Sidra to draw Libyan forces into a fight. A series of exchanges followed during which US Naval forces were attacked and responded, downing Libyan aircraft, destroying naval vessels, and a missile site. Qaddafi responded by bombing a Berlin discotheque frequented by American GIs. In April 1986, President Reagan countered with a bombing raid on Libya and the conventional wisdom says that following the US attack, Qaddafi got the message and ceased his terrorist attacks

on US citizens. In truth however, he continued to conduct attacks against Americans on a regular basis up through the end of President Reagan's term. Qaddafi's only apparent change in tactic was to carry out the attacks surreptitiously, such as was the case in the Pan Am 103 bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland. That act took years to trace back to Libya. When President George H. W. Bush took office, his approach to Libya was markedly less confrontational and there was a concurrent decrease in terrorist attacks (Canada and the World Backgrounder 2003, 21). It is impossible to say definitively whether the change in US policy toward Libya precipitated the decrease in terrorist attacks, but the possible correlation merits consideration when evaluating the role culture plays in the conduct of foreign policy.

### Can Culture Be Changed?

It should be obvious that there will continue to be significant cultural differences between the US and other countries. It is important that these differences be studied and understood so the best approach is chosen by the government that will protect US interests. There has been ample literature since the invasion of Iraq about the challenge facing the US military in bridging the gaps between these two cultures. The different values and traits of US and Arab culture often seem to be at opposite extremes.

If culture is so important, and can have a determining effect on the outcome of military operations, what is the US to do when confronted with cultural traits that are diametrically opposed to its own? Does it give up? Does it impose its will by force? This leads to another, perhaps more important question. Is it possible to change the culture of the target group or nation, and if so how and why? Some believe it is not possible to change the local culture of a society through stability operations (Salmoni 2004, 58). In



contrast, historical examples, such as Japan and Germany where enemies became allies, seem to indicate it is in fact possible.

Huntington develops the concept of a torn country as one where the leadership tries to override the dominant culture and orient it toward a different one (Huntington 2003, 138). An example is Mexico, whose culture is closely aligned with Latin America, but where the leaders have, for many years, tried to break those ties and orient the country more toward Anglo-European culture. Imposing this type of cultural shift causes upheaval and predictably arouses resistance from the society upon which it is imposed. It is analogous to the American situation today in Iraq. Though the US does not represent the sovereign leadership of Iraq, its reluctant role as occupier makes it the de facto power that is trying to guide the nation toward a Western-style democracy. Huntington lays out three prerequisites for success in what he terms “civilization shifting.”

First, the political and economic elite of the country has to be generally supportive of and enthusiastic about this move. Second, the public has to be at least willing to acquiesce in the redefinition of identity. Third, the dominant elements in the host civilization, in most cases the West, have to be willing to embrace the convert. (Huntington 2003, 139)

In Iraq today, it is doubtful that any of the above three criteria are met. Regarding the first point, there are those who want to move Iraq forward, but there is also a sense of hesitation on the part of some, waiting to see which way things will go, and those in the government straining to not be labeled a puppet of the US. The final hours leading up to the execution of Saddam Hussein in December of 2006, saw a period of intense back-and-forth negotiations between Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki and US officials, both military and civilian. The US pushed for restraint and patience to ensure everything was done in an absolutely legal and dignified manner while Maliki was adamant about the US

turning custody over to the Iraqi government so the execution could be carried out (Burns 2007). In the end, Maliki won out, leaving the US no option but to acquiesce to his demands. The question remains as to why Prime Minister Maliki pushed so hard in this matter, and it is quite possible he was simply asserting Iraqi sovereignty over the matter and trying to prove to his constituents that he was not beholden to American wishes.

Whether there is support from the larger public as required by criterion two is difficult to measure amidst the ongoing violence. Of positive note, Iraqis have turned out in force for each election, but the sectarian strife that hampers the formation of a strong unity government evidence a lack of enthusiasm to change the culture. On the third point, there are the calls by ever growing factions in the US to pull out and that the mission there has, if not failed, at a minimum has not come close to its original goal. Indeed the United Nations (UN), some allies, nongovernmental organizations, and others have long since left which shows, at best, a lack of resolve to pursue the mission through to completion and, at worst, confirms an unwillingness to embrace the new Iraq as it stands today.

Huntington's prognosis regarding culture shifting is that, "The process of identity redefinition will be prolonged, interrupted, and painful, politically, socially, institutionally, and culturally. It also to date has failed" (Huntington 2003, 139). Examples of the difficulty in shifting cultures can be seen in Russia, Turkey, and Mexico. Leaders in each have made strong attempts to change their respective societies to become more western, and all have had, at best, limited results.

Sixteen years after the Soviet Union's collapse, Russia's economy is still far below Western standards despite efforts to implement western-style economic reforms.

This is more remarkable when one considers the natural resources at Russia's disposal yet the country seems unable to capitalize on its position. Resources plus the addition of political reform does not necessarily equate to success economically. Something else is holding Russia back from success. RAND related a similar problem where the ingredients for success appeared to all be in place, yet success did not come. In addressing building what it terms a "rule of law culture," RAND explained that constructing courthouses, training judges, and police forces are not enough, and they cited numerous examples where efforts focused on these outward appearances failed to achieve the desired goal.

Promoting the rule of law involves creating new norms and *changing culture* as much as it does creating new institutions and legal codes. Without a widely shared *cultural commitment* to the idea of rule of law, courts are just buildings, judges just public employees, and constitutions just pieces of paper. (Dobbins et. al. 2007, 88, emphasis added)

Russia, instead of becoming more western, may be surreptitiously heading back in the other direction toward dictatorship. President Putin has been criticized by the West for reverting to strong-arm tactics, such as intimidation of the media, which is reminiscent of Russia's Cold-War past. Putin has rejected any criticism and his position seems to be that Russia is different and Western models do not apply, though he still asserts that he will follow the constitution and voluntarily step down when his term expires.

Turkey has worked continuously since Mustafa Ataturk to establish a more secular society and achieve closer ties with Europe. There have been some successes, such as its membership in NATO, but there have also been many failures, such as their recent repeated rejection for membership in the European Union. The Turkish people are still torn between two worlds as was witnessed during the Iraq war. In the lead-up to the

invasion, as in Europe, there were serious debates in the Turkish government concerning how much if any support to provide to the US invasion. The current battle between the secular, pro-western forces, and the fundamentalist, pro-Islamic factions, threw back the curtain on the ongoing struggles within Turkey to identify itself with either the West or the Muslim world. The decision to deny the US the ability to launch its planned northern offensive into Iraq from Turkish soil was made to placate those forces in the government and society who fear drifting too far from their Middle Eastern neighbors.

These two examples are difficult for many in the West to understand. Americans in particular, who often suffer from an ethno-centric view of the world, are puzzled as to why cultures in other nations would resist the progress that Western civilization offers. The truth is that these cultures often do not view the ways of the West as progress. The fact that cultures resist this type of change even when it comes from their own leadership should give the US pause when it seeks to implement the same changes as an outside, foreign force. Huntington concludes:

Political leaders imbued with the hubris to think that they can fundamentally reshape the culture of their societies are destined to fail. While they can introduce elements of Western culture, they are unable permanently to suppress or to eliminate the core elements of their indigenous culture. Conversely, the Western virus, once it is lodged in another society, is difficult to expunge...They [political leaders] produce torn countries; they do not create Western societies. They infect their country with a cultural schizophrenia which becomes its continuing and defining characteristic. (Huntington 2003, 154)

### Culture and Nation Building

The foregoing discussion about changing culture leads to the basic question of this thesis, which is the role of cultural factors in nation building. The literature cited to this point is fairly unanimous in asserting the importance of cultural awareness if two cultures are to interact successfully with one another. It does not necessarily imply that

this awareness is necessary at all levels or to the same degree. The RAND Corporation published several books on nation building where they described best practices based on historical research. The first book focused on operations where the US was the sole or lead nation involved (Dobbins 2003). The second work compared United Nations experiences in similar operations (Dobbins et. al. 2005). Its latest work was a “how-to” guide of nation building that promulgated what they believe the key tenets of successful nation building to be (Dobbins et al. 2007). So what did RAND say about the value of culture nation building?

It is remarkable to discover the paucity of references to culture in any of the three studies. Both the US- and UN-focused works made almost no mention of cultural understanding as a prerequisite or a key ingredient for success. The 2007 work did make several references to the importance of understanding the local culture, but it was often with an emphasis on the tactical level whereby local military commanders or civilian administrators must understand the culture of the people they are attempting to govern. In the end, RAND summed up its six top priorities for nation building as security, humanitarian relief, governance, economic stabilization, democratization, and development (Dobbins et al. 2007, xxiii). Notably absent from the list was any mention of cultural study or awareness. Although culture is imbedded in much of the discussion in these specific areas, RAND either believed it is not important enough to warrant being singled out or simply took it as a given that cultural awareness will be part of any intervention. In either case, cultural issues were not given much prominence.

The research done by RAND will serve as a null model for this thesis by providing an analysis of nation building without an emphasis on culture. RAND stands in

contrast to much of the literature previously cited regarding the importance of understanding cultural factors in any intervention abroad. It provides a useful baseline from which to measure culture's effects and determine whether they are correct in giving it such little emphasis.

### Summary and Conclusions

Finding the right and lasting solution to a conflict will always be difficult when the cultural distance between the combatants is great. The US faces a unique challenge in the world today. In a conventional war it possesses the military power necessary to force its will if it so desires. It may seem contradictory to consider this military dominance to be simultaneously a weakness, but it could be argued that it is precisely this perceived power that handicaps American strategic thinkers and prevents them from fully comprehending the impact of culture on insurgencies and occupation. The belief that power trumps culture is always just below the surface. The US will still pursue peaceful means to the maximum extent possible, but it is quite possible that the maximum extent for the US is cut short because leaders can not formulate and perceive solutions outside of their own cultural view. This potential was illustrated by the examples from the Arab-Israeli conflict as well as US relations with Libya.

The literature solidly establishes the magnitude of culture's impacts on society and individuals and the ways those outside of a given culture can run into trouble by not understanding the environment. There have been many cases in history where one culture has attempted to change another to suit its own interests, and these have met with, at times, great success and at other times with abject failure. Nation building is a perilous endeavor with no guarantee of a positive outcome.

Most international conflicts and civil wars that are intractable are ethnic. They are difficult to resolve because they are fought over values that are non-negotiable. The source of such conflict is “the denial of those elements required in the development of all people and societies, and whose pursuit is a compelling need in all. These are security, distinctive identity, social [and political] recognition of identity, and effective participation in the process that determines such developmental requirements.” (Rabie 1994, 158)

If culture can place limits on the effectiveness of military operations, this does not mean that the US must always be limited in its aims or that it cannot pursue them. What it perhaps means is that it may not always be able to take the most direct route if the goal is long-term success. The correct, long-term route may not even involve the military or it may simply take longer to accomplish, but the end result will be far superior to the short-term gains accomplished through ill-conceived, hurried military action. RAND apparently believed that many principles of nation building translate universally, but that should not give US leaders license to ignore the cultural dimension wholesale. The question then becomes where to find the balance between a crippling worry over cultural issues versus simply plowing forward with blinders, ignorant of the culture.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to consider the role that culture plays and should play in strategic decision making. The goal was to specifically analyze what weight should be given to cultural factors in assessing the feasibility of military action in a given region. This knowledge can then serve as a basis for evaluating the US' occupation of Iraq to determine successes and shortcomings as well as offer suggestions for the future.

A null model for this work is provided by the research done by RAND on nation building, where they seem to give a low priority to cultural issues. If the primary hypothesis is written:  $H_1$ : Cultural understanding is necessary for successful nation building. Then the null hypothesis would be written:  $H_0$ : Cultural understanding is not necessary for successful nation building.

In all research it is never possible to definitively prove the primary thesis, since this would require proving every single case in history that applies, an impossible task. By considering a null thesis however, which is basically the inverse of the primary thesis, a researcher can disprove the null much easier than he or she can prove the primary. If the researcher can find just one case for which the null is not valid, it is then disproved and the primary thesis is affirmed in some measure. It is still not proven, but its validity is strengthened.

In order to obtain the answers to the above questions, it was first necessary to examine culture as a unique concept, removed from military operations or discussions of national strategy. Chapter 2 analyzes culture in general and the numerous components that comprise it. This encompasses academic theories as well as contemporary realities of



how different cultures interact and view each other, and the sources for these views. Chapter 2 describes methods for classifying different cultures as well as examining the influence culture exercises on the individual and society. After examining the pervasiveness of culture and its effects, the author then applies that understanding to national and international levels of interaction by enumerating examples of culture at work at these higher levels as well as successful or failed attempts to change that same culture. Fundamental to understanding other cultures is a clear understanding of one's own culture as well. Ignorance of one's own culture can effectively serve as blinders for someone who is limited by, and unaware of, an overly ethnocentric view. This ignorance severely impedes their ability to see issues through the perspective of other cultures, and hence their ability to understand the true nature of the forces at work. Chapter 2, therefore, also includes an analysis of American culture as compared to other regions of the world and how those different societies interpret US culture. In international relations it does not really matter much what the US thinks about its own culture. Rather, it matters what the other side thinks the US thinks about its culture. Perception is reality.

Chapter 2 sets the stage for the remainder of the work by establishing the importance of culture and illustrating the significant differences that exist which could pose risks to US military operations or prohibit them. The author also develops a framework for recognizing cultural differences and some of the common problems encountered when communicating across cultural boundaries.

To better understand the capabilities and limitations the military has when confronted with a foreign culture, the author elected to conduct a case study of an operation of similar scope to Iraq, involving a society that was culturally distant from the

US. The US occupation of Japan after World War II met this criteria. The intent was to identify lessons learned from the American experience in Japan that can be applied to current operations in Iraq or to future operations where there will be significant cultural differences between the US and opposing forces. This case study comprises the “Analysis” in chapter 4.

Japan was chosen for this case study, and not Germany, due to the greater differences in culture. The cultural divide was not as great in the European theater and the goal was to draw parallels to the present occupation of Iraq, another country with a culture vastly different from the US. The author drew on data from multiple works from the period as well as contemporary analyses to establish possible links to current operations. These sources included the perspective of both the Japanese as well as their American occupiers.

In addition to the case study of post-WWII Japan, Chapter 4 also includes discussion relating those experiences to the current US occupation of Iraq.

#### Case Study Methodology

There are basically two procedures to follow when testing a theory. Often the preferred method is to conduct a controlled experiment to test and evaluate one or multiple variables against known criteria in order to establish causal relationships among the participants. The second method involves simply observing phenomena as they exist naturally and inferring relationships from those observations. This method sometimes involves observations of large numbers of participants from which the researcher desires to gather enough data to achieve statistical significance in order to attempt generalizations about the larger population from which the sample was taken. At the

other extreme is the case study where a very small number of data points, or even a single point, are considered. This falls under the second method of observing natural phenomena, but is distinct due to its use of limited data points.

Of the three options explained above (experimental, large group observations, and case study), the experimental method is the most rigorous and has the greatest potential to prove cause and effect. Observations of large groups can detect trends that can be reasonably extrapolated to the entire population under study, but the drawback is that it is usually not feasible to get highly detailed, rich data on the target group since the research is dispersed across numerous participants. Stephen Van Evera, Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, explained that the final option, research via case study, has been criticized for two primary reasons (Van Evera 1997, 51). The first critique is that case-studies do not permit the researcher to control for outside variables that can confound the data. The data collected is not random and with so few data points to consider it is not possible to correlate findings because so many omitted variables could be at play that affects the outcome.

Van Evera counters this critique by asserting that case-study methodology can in fact control for many omitted variables. First, the background condition, for many of the observed cases, is usually fairly uniform across cases. Further, the case-study method allows the researcher to make numerous observations of both independent and dependent variables from which he or she can test for covariance within the case. Both of these facts enable the researcher to eliminate much of the influence from third variables. A second way to control omitted variables is to be careful in the selection of the case study. If the researcher chooses cases that are at the extremes on the subject variable under study, in

this case culture, then it reduces the possibility that the observed phenomena are due to intervening variables, and not due to the subject variable. For the present study, by choosing to study a culture that is extremely different (Japan and Iraq) from the US, the probability increases that whatever the results of the interaction between the two, the causes will be grounded in the respective cultures (Van Evera 1997, 52).

The second major criticism of case studies is that their results cannot be generalized to the greater population. Van Evera accepts this as a more valid criticism than the former, but asserts this is mostly only true in regards to single case studies (Van Evera 1997, 53).

In light of the apparent weakness of case studies as a research tool, one might wonder why they are even used. Van Evera cites two strengths to counter these criticisms. Case studies usually study very unique phenomena regarding private discourse and the policies of the actors involved. The data necessary to test or predict these types of behaviors are not usually obtainable through any means other than a case study and the evidence can be more compelling than that collected through studies involving larger numbers (Van Evera 1997, 54).

The second benefit of case study methodology is that it is particularly suited to answering the question of how A affects B, instead of merely establishing that A affects B. The case study method, while unable to prove causal relationships or to establish trends valid outside of the particular case, is nonetheless beneficial for the depth of information it produces. If the evidence from the study supports the theory being examined, the researcher has the opportunity to delve much deeper into the situation to trace the process through its varied machinations and discover how a particular outcome

came about. Studies of large numbers of data can establish that a relationship exists. Case studies explains why it exists (Van Evera 1997, 55).

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter 5 assesses what can be learned from the American occupation of Japan as well as the validity of any parallels between Japan and Iraq. It also discusses the limitations of the study, as no historical example can provide a truly valid, one-for-one comparison with the situation in Iraq. Each operation is necessarily unique, and so broad conclusions or generalizations based on past experiences can not be made with certainty. Chapter 5 also addresses recommendations for future operations that have arisen as part of this study.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

The purpose of this thesis is to determine what lessons can be learned from past experiences with occupation and nation building that can be applied to the current situation in Iraq. The author has established to this point the impact of culture and its pervasiveness throughout every level of society. It affects nearly everything an individual and the society does, whether consciously or not. In order to provide relevant data for comparison, it is first necessary to identify a past operation of similar scope. Japan was chosen for this study and what follows is a detailed account of various aspects of the US occupation that impacted upon Japanese culture. Following the history of the occupation, there will be a discussion on Iraq as it exists today, its culture and setting, and how current operations there can relate to past experiences in Japan.

#### United States Occupation of Japan

Samuel Huntington refers to Japan as a lone state (2003, 137). It is a culture unique to itself, with little in common with other cultures or civilizations. Unlike English, French, German, Arabic, or a host of other languages that are spoken across multiple countries, Japanese is unique to Japan. Japan is also geographically separated from other nations by the sea and exhibits little cultural influence on other nations. Emigrants from Japan for example, tend to assimilate into the parent culture where they live, as is the case in the US. Contrast this with other groups who often do not assimilate as readily, such as Latin American immigrants in the US or Muslim immigrants in Europe, who exert significant influence on the host culture.

In light of the cultural isolation of Japan, it is understandable that Japanese society is very foreign to Americans. In post World War II Japan, before globalization and the Internet, the differences would have been even greater for the American occupiers. How did they go about trying to understand this new culture and to manipulate it to foster a peaceful society? No one would deny that postwar Japan has been model of success. The question remains how much of this can be attributed to the American occupation and how can it be applied today? How important was it to understand the culture in order to implement the desired reforms?

The State Department began detailed planning for the occupation of Japan as early as May 1942. Already in early 1943, there were discussions about how to reform the Japanese educational system once the war was over. A formal policy was approved for that purpose by July 1944, a full year before the occupation began (Takemae et al. 2002, 348). MacArthur therefore had a fairly thorough plan in hand when he assumed control in 1945 (Moore and Robinson 2002, 23).

The State Department plan consisted of three phases. The first goal was to start by sending a clear message of US control through restrictions on Japanese society and trying war criminals. The second phase was to be the longest phase and its goals were to establish a democratic government while stamping out militarism. The final phase would be to integrate Japan into the greater world community both economically and politically (US Army Command and General Staff College 2005, 5).

It was clear from the beginning that Japan would be required to make a major cultural shift. It would not be enough to simply eliminate their military capability, try criminals and go home. Secretary of State James F. Byrnes used the phrase “spiritual

disarmament” to illustrate US goals regarding Japanese culture. MacArthur’s term was “filling a spiritual vacuum” (Moore and Robinson 2002, 9). The US knew it was necessary to achieve acceptance from the populace if it was to succeed. The Initial Post-Surrender Policy discusses the importance of setting up a new government and states “this government should conform as closely as may be to principles of democratic self-government,” but “it is not the responsibility of the Allied Powers to impose upon Japan any form of government not supported by the freely expressed will of the people” (Moore and Robinson 2002, 10). In the end, it was the occupation’s stated goal to mold Japanese society into one that desired peace and rejected war.

MacArthur’s role was truly unique. The weakness of other nations in the region as well as the other allied powers who were so devastated by the war left the US in a tremendous position of power. This was in large measure transferred to the person of General Douglas MacArthur, who was granted unprecedented power to occupy Japan and direct postwar policy largely as he saw fit. His authority was so extensive, he was actually empowered to issue official policy without even having to consult with the State Department. A message sent to MacArthur from the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 6 September 1945, outlined his authority as follows:

1. The authority of the Emperor and the Japanese Government to rule the State is subordinate to you as Supreme Commander for the Allied powers. You will exercise your authority as you deem proper to carry out your mission. Our relations with Japan do not rest on a contractual basis, but on an unconditional surrender. Since your authority is supreme, you will not entertain any question on the part of the Japanese as to its scope.
2. Control of Japan shall be exercised through the Japanese Government to the extent that such an arrangement produces satisfactory results. This does not prejudice your right to act directly if required. You may enforce the orders issued by you by the employment of such measures as you deem necessary, including the use of force.



3. The statement of intentions contained in the Potsdam Declaration will be given full effect. It will not be given effect, however, because we consider ourselves bound in a contractual relationship with Japan as a result of that document. It will be respected and given effect because the Potsdam Declaration forms a part of our policy stated in good faith with relation to Japan and with relation to peace and security in the Far East. (Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers 1949a, 427)

In short, MacArthur had absolute authority to dictate terms to the Japanese government.

Even though there were official statements describing US intentions, such as the Potsdam Declaration, the US reserved the right to change its mind whenever it or MacArthur saw fit.

MacArthur established a headquarters for civil affairs, staffed with civilians and former officers now in civilian status. He also ordered the Japanese government to establish a Central Liaison Office that became the major conduit for information and direction between MacArthur and the Japanese government until late 1949.

MacArthur believed strongly that in order to succeed the Japanese needed to govern themselves or at least have them think that this was the case and that they had some say in their future. He would give orders not directly to the Japanese people, but to the government, which would then disseminate it further down to local governments and towns. In this manner the Japanese were able to be involved in the process of reform. MacArthur further established a military oversight organization that mirrored the Japanese bureaucracy and would report back any discrepancies in implementation of US policies. MacArthur, upon learning of deficiencies would then report it to the Japanese government to ensure compliance (US Army Command and General Staff College 2005, 6).

The advantages of this system were twofold. First, it legitimized the proposed reforms in the eyes of the people because they came from their own government.

Secondly, it helped to avoid cultural missteps by the US because all of their directives effectively went through a cultural filter in the form of the Japanese leadership. The government accomplished the important task of adapting the US directives to the understanding and sensibilities of the Japanese people.

### The Five Great Reforms

At the occupation's outset, General MacArthur laid out his plan for remaking Japan. One of the early dictums, issued by General Headquarters (GHQ) on 11 October 1945, became known as the five fundamental reforms or the five great reforms. These were:

1. Enfranchisement of women
2. Encouragement of labor unions
3. Reform of education
4. Reform of the judicial system
5. Democratization of economic institutions (Moore and Robinson 2002, 10)

Upon issuing these directives, MacArthur added “that these ‘reforms in the social order of Japan’ are to be accomplished ‘as rapidly as they can be assimilated’” (Moore and Robinson 2002, 10).

These reforms each were deliberate assaults on various aspects of Japanese culture. Giving women the right to vote could accomplish multiple goals. It sent a clear message to the Japanese that the US was in charge and serious about conducting major reform. By inviting women out of the shadows of this male-dominated society and giving them a say in government, the US hoped to tame the imperial and militaristic theology of the previous government. If the women who might lose husbands and sons to war could

have a say in decision making, the US believed there would be greater restraint. It also has the result of broadening the base upon which the government must support itself and to which it must be answerable. This lessens the government's power and transfers some of that power back to the people at large.

The second and fifth reforms had similar effects. Establishing labor unions would further weaken governmental power by empowering citizens to organize and push their own agenda. This type of reform was intended to promote individual rights and provide a better counterbalance to the previous dominating presence of the state. Likewise, efforts to combat the disparity in income between the classes, combined with leveling the opportunities for all to own the means of production, opened possibilities for the lower class that were previously unattainable. This further broke down the barriers between those with power and those without.

Education is an obvious choice for reform as well if an occupying force intends to influence the culture long-term, and so numerous reforms were undertaken, as will be discussed in more detail later.

It is interesting to note that with many of the proposed reforms, MacArthur did not have to explicitly implement them by force. He would issue firm suggestions for reform and then allow the Japanese government to determine how best to implement them. GHQ, of course, kept a watchful eye to verify that the reforms were implemented in a manner that met its intentions, and would voice its concerns when this was not done. It appears however, that the Japanese decided early on that it was preferable to implement reform themselves than to wait for forced direction from MacArthur. Such was the case with numerous education changes where the US often received reform proposals from

Japanese officials instead of the other way around. Eiji Takemae, a professor of political science at Tokyo Keizai University, and one of Japan's leading historians on the US occupation, states that in the case of land reform, there was much debate in the Japanese Diet until the opposition finally gave way under the threat of forced implementation by MacArthur (Takemae et al. 2002, 343). As will be shown later, some of the self-instituted reforms conducted by the Japanese were modeled on the US, or at least what the Japanese thought the US wanted them to do. Still other reforms were original ideas developed by Japanese leaders, sometimes in an effort to hedge against intervention by the US. Sometimes the thought was that it would be better to implement something on their own terms, whether they wanted to or not, rather than having something more intrusive forced upon them by the Americans. This proactive approach on the part of the occupied was naturally a great benefit to the occupiers.

### Women's Rights

MacArthur's goal with the enfranchisement of women was to make "government directly subservient to the well-being of the home" (Takamae et al. 2002, 240). The granting of universal suffrage had immediate impact on Japanese society. The first parliamentary elections after extending the right to vote to women were held in April 1946. For that election seventy-nine women ran for office and thirty-nine succeeded in winning a seat in the Diet. Empowered by their new status as equals, women began demanding reforms at all levels of society. High-school-aged girls staged successful boycotts to demand the resignation of principals and teachers that were too militaristic. Pressure was also brought to bear upon executives at dozens of newspapers to similarly step down as atonement for their wartime actions (Dower 1999, 242).

The US obviously cannot take direct credit for these actions. Much of the changes noted above were at the grassroots level, not initiated by the US at all. The role the US did play was to first, firmly and clearly establish the rights of women in the society, and then guarantee those rights with adequate security so that this type of groundswell could develop and grow.

### Economic Reform

Reinforcing the goal of decentralizing government power and encouraging individual freedom and initiative was the fifth Great Reform, to change the structure of the economy so that power was taken from an elite few and distributed among the many. A major component of the US-imposed changes on the Japanese economy was land reform. Land reform “was a peaceful agrarian revolution that swept aside pre-modern social relations and transformed the Japanese countryside” (Takemae et al. 2002, 339). Japanese society was extremely hierarchical with much of land ownership centered in wealthy landlords, who then rented the land out to lower class tenants. There was little opportunity for these tenants to move up the social ladder, and the cost of their tenancy was often crushing financially.

At the end of the war, nearly one-half of all Japanese lived on or near farms. It is easy to discern the disparity between landowners and tenants when one discovers that, at this same time, non-owners worked nearly one-half of all farmland and 70 percent of all farmers had to deal with some form of tenancy for the land they worked (Takemae et al. 2002, 339). Many landowners were simply absentee landlords enjoying all the benefits of their social status but doing nothing to develop the land or support those who worked it. The fifth reform sought to right this imbalance by implementing a plan whereby the

government would purchase land from absentee landowners and then sell it to those who worked the same land. After much wrangling in the Japanese Diet among different factions, agrarian reform was passed on 21 October 1946 (Takamai et al, 2002, 343).

The new law authorized the government to purchase all uncultivated lands and land owned by absentee landlords and then allowed tenants on the land to either purchase it outright or pay it off over thirty years at a modest interest rate. Land prices were based on 1937 market values, a bargain that provided incentive to get the program moving. Those who still continued to rent also received greater protection due to a provision that limited rental payments to a maximum of 25 percent of the annual crop values produced. Thus, there was a built-in incentive to maximize productivity so that higher rental revenues could be realized (Takemae et al. 2002, 344).

By 1949, much of the land redistribution was complete which dramatically altered the Japanese agrarian model. Prior to the war, 46 percent of all farmland was rented, a figure that dropped to 10 percent after land reform. A full 80 percent of previously tenanted land was now under private ownership by those who worked the land. This resulted in 57 percent of rural families making the significant transition from tenant to owner and a further 35 percent became part owners (Takemae et al. 2002, 344).

So what was the impact of such a dramatic shift in agricultural practice? Takemae suggests it probably did much to pacify any potentially radical forces in the rural, lower classes and win them over to the side of the occupation. Beyond the short-term gain in good will, land reform of this magnitude was a blow to the hierarchical nature of Japanese culture by wresting a source of power from the hands of a small minority and distributing it among the masses. Beyond the economics however; this, combined with

the reforms already discussed, would force greater power-sharing among far more Japanese citizens. It stood in opposition to the previous arrangement where power over most everything was concentrated in ever smaller and higher circles of society.

In analyzing the forces behind the excessive militarism of Japanese culture, the US narrowed the list of sources down to three. They determined the Japanese government had directly manipulated the culture through: (1) education, (2) religion, and (3) information to cultivate a society that would promote strict obedience to authority in general and to the state in particular (Takemae et al. 2002, 347).

### Reforming Education

MacArthur believed very strongly that democracy's survival in Japan could only be assured through reform and control of the education system (Nishi 2004, 3). In this period of total war, there was also total victory. Defeat was felt and reinforced throughout the society in a myriad of ways. Japanese schoolchildren had always been taught to take great care of their textbooks, for example, but as education reforms began, material in existing textbooks deemed to be inappropriate was simply blackened out to hide the offensive material. In some books, the censorship was so extensive as to make the book almost unusable. Japanese education specialist Nakamura Kikuji remarked on this action, "Now we were suddenly told to smear the books with ink. . . . I felt as if I were defiling myself. . . . The inked-over school books impressed indelibly on youthful minds the harsh finality of defeat. For many pupils, that moment of truth had a lasting influence on their lives" (Takemae et al. 2002, 362). Thus, the US sent the clear message down to the very youngest in the society that things would now be quite different.

### Preoccupation Educational System

The education system in Japan was stratified by both gender and class. Boys and girls studied separately with greater emphasis on male education than female. There were also multiple tracks within the system driven by class distinctions. Everyone started with six years of compulsory study, and of those who wished to continue beyond, some went to elite schools while most were sent to schools centered on general education for the masses. Those in this larger category usually exhausted their educational opportunities after only two additional years of schooling at the elementary level. Approximately 10 percent of male elementary school graduates and 8 percent of female graduates were able to continue on to middle school (five years), and less than 8 percent of middle-school graduates went on to higher schools (three years). The end result was that less than 1 percent of those completing elementary school would ever get to study at the university level (Takemae et al. 2002, 628-9).

Japan's educational model was driven by the Imperial Rescript on Education which contained requirements whose intent was to foster a mindset of obedience to authority. The rescript was written in 1890 under the Emperor Meiji and had guided Japanese education since then. As a result, the curriculum in Japanese schools became very militaristic, stressing devotion to the state, and obedience to the emperor as the society's highest ideals. The emperor's image was prominently displayed in classrooms and students were required to honor it as a way of instilling absolute allegiance.

### Postoccupation Education Reforms

The goal of US education policy in Japan was to foster a more democratic, freer mind-set among its citizens that would open the culture to the outside world and promote



a peaceful society. The US sought to eliminate barriers to education as well as to break down the walls that existed within the different educational tracks, making the whole system much more democratic and available to a greater number of people. It abolished separation by sex and encouraged better education for females than had been offered previously. Female education prior to this had been largely focused on subjects to make them better wives and mothers, not necessarily equal with their future husbands.

Apart from the obvious need to purge militaristic material from the textbooks, the larger task was reforming the cultural mindset. Martial art training was replaced with more traditional physical education. The number of core classes was reduced and students were given a greater choice of elective courses, thus enabling them to pursue their own interests more directly and to exercise greater control over their education. In class, rote memorization was deemphasized while encouraging greater discussion and problem-solving skills. GHQ also instituted student government to foster democracy modeling within schools. Parent Teacher Associations were established throughout the country to encourage parental involvement and within five years, 90 percent of school districts had them (Takemae et al. 2002, 367).

The compulsory period of schooling was extended from six years to nine, six in elementary school followed by three in middle school. This was compulsory for both sexes and free. Those who wished to continue could then attend three years of high school and have the opportunity to study at the university level. This new system did a lot to eliminate hindrances based on class, wealth, or social standing and enabled a much broader section of the society to become better educated (Takemae et al. 2002, 365).

For the reforms to work it was also necessary to weed out wartime educators who had pushed their ideology of militarism and blind obedience so vociferously. The purge began in May of 1946, and within three years had forcefully eliminated 3,000 teachers deemed unsuitable under the new program. However, merely the threat of action achieved even greater results. A date was set beyond which any teachers forcibly terminated would lose their pensions. Rather than risk the loss, 116,000 teachers resigned voluntarily. This combined purge of nearly 120,000 teachers constituted 24 percent of Japan's educators at the time and created a significant hole which would take some time to fill (Takemae et al. 2002, 352).

The purges were not limited to education, but reverberated throughout the government (Nishi 2004, 3). This action effectively wiped the slate clean of undesirable ideologues, enabling those remaining to tackle reforms with uninhibited vigor. In fact, throughout the process of education reform, Japanese administrators themselves repeatedly came up with their own suggestions for change that they then implemented on their own after obtaining approval from GHQ. Some of the reforms were original, while others were suggested by Japanese leaders after they themselves had studied the American system and desired to adopt some of the practices they observed.

### Reforming Religion

Freedom of religion was important to MacArthur in his plan to reform Japan, however, the desire to not allow state interference with religion presented its own problem for GHQ since religion had been a powerful tool in the preceding conflict. State Shinto had been used effectively to blur the lines between allegiance to the government and adherence to religious faith. Commitment and sacrifice for religious belief was

intertwined with commitment to and sacrifice for the state. The question then became how to influence the society's religious beliefs toward freedom and democracy without violating the principle of freedom of religion? How can government manipulate something that's supposed to be off limits?

There were three religious divisions in Japan, Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity, the latter two being minority religions while the former was state religion. Buddhism and Christianity were restricted under Imperial rule and their progress intentionally hindered. Christians were actively persecuted. Shintoism, on the other hand, had state sanction as well as state financial support. Its numerous shrines throughout the country where the faithful could worship were maintained with funds from the government.

This financial support was an obvious and easy target for GHQ. A few of the Shinto shrines that had been centers of fanaticism and used to encourage militaristic thought were simply closed. MacArthur cut off funding for the remaining shrines and required them to be self-sustaining, effectively ending state support of Shinto. GHQ simultaneously forbade the persecution of other faiths and established the right of all to worship as they chose. They also released anyone from prison that had been put there because of religious beliefs (Takemae et al. 2002, 372). Further, all government officials were forbidden to participate in any religious ceremonies in any official capacity (2002, 375).

By eliminating State Shinto and protecting all faiths from persecution, MacArthur weakened the power of Shinto, while simultaneously increasing the power of competing faiths. Although this was an obvious action to take, the cultural impact should not be overlooked. Shinto had been one of the state's many tools to focus the minds of the

people along the leaders' desired framework. Dismantling that religious culture without violating the very democratic principles one is attempting to foster was a delicate task. Further, what is successful in one society or with certain religions, may not work with others. Religion goes to the very heart of culture, addressing a society's most tightly held beliefs and values. It nonetheless cannot be ignored in a military occupation, such as in Japan, since religious issues can be the source of enormous obstacles to success.

### Information

The flow of information had been tightly controlled by the Japanese government prior to occupation and its citizens labored under severe censorship. In some respects this proved useful to the US during the occupation since the US also wanted to control the information to benefit its goals of democratizing and pacifying the nation. The Japanese were already accustomed to censorship and so there was no significant resistance to GHQ employing the same tactics. The US did indeed establish freedom of the press but with some caveats. GHQ still tried to control news and other media from outside Japan in order to promote its carefully crafted agenda of reform (Takemae et al. 2002, 386).

Another enabler of reform was to make English study more widely available. Widely discouraged or even forbidden before and during the war, many Japanese now flocked to opportunities to learn English and communicate with the outside world. Western missionaries were allowed into the country and discovered many visitors to their meetings were there not so much for religious education as for a chance to learn or practice English (Takemae et al. 2002, 400).

General Headquarters, Supreme Commander Allied Powers (SCAP), prepared a report for Congress in October 1949 that detailed the progress made to date. In it they

reviewed the extensive thought control measures imposed by the Japanese government prior to the occupation. The Japanese police force had been highly centralized and tightly controlled by Tokyo. This enabled it to be an instrument of the state to keep the populous in check and control the flow of information. The Peace Preservation Law resulted in the establishment of “thought police” and similar organizations within the police force.

Further, the Ordinance for Punishment of Contravention of Police Regulations empowered local police forces with broad authority to enforce official will. Under this ordinance, “police courts” were established where officers could adjudicate “police offenses.” These offenses equated to misdemeanors and police officers effectively acted as both judge and jury. In reality, these courts became a tool of intimidation, more often used to stamp out freedom of speech or freedom of assembly. It granted authority at the lowest levels to subvert due process and mete out punishment to those with views contrary to the official ideology (SCAP 1949a, 7).

### Constitutional Reform

Key to reforming the political establishment was the writing and passing of a new constitution, which was one of the earliest priorities for the US. The US did not write it, but did issue a list of requirements to the government that had to be addressed by the new constitution. The SCAP report to Congress outlined what those requirements were, some of which are listed below.

1. The constitution must prohibit the influence of the military on the government
2. It must establish an independent judiciary.
3. It had to include a bill of rights.
4. There had to be provisions for the impeachment or recall of elected leaders.

5. It had to include a mechanism for amending the constitution.

6. Finally, the new constitution must greatly reduce the power of the Emperor over the legislative body, while simultaneously strengthening and expanding the power and authority of the legislature (SCAP 1949a, 9).

After much debate within the Japanese government, a new constitution that met all of the above requirements was implemented on 3 May 1947. One of the most significant reforms was to reduce the Emperor to the status of figurehead, or symbol of the state, stripping him of any real power.

The new government consisted of three branches: the national Diet, the cabinet, and the national judiciary. The Diet, or legislature, was essentially the highest level of state power and elected a Prime Minister. The various ministers of state that composed the cabinet were appointed by the Prime Minister, but the entire cabinet was collectively responsible to the Diet. An independent judiciary, appointed by the cabinet, was established that also had the power of judicial review. The office of the Emperor was retained, but merely as figurehead.

#### Summary of United States Occupation of Japan

It would be incorrect to say that the US military entered Japan in 1945, armed with a thorough understanding of Japanese culture and society. At the highest levels, MacArthur's in particular, this was plausible. However, the majority of US servicemen and women as well as the civilian administrators involved likely had very little cultural understanding of Japan prior to the occupation. Despite this cultural ignorance, the reforms were all a conscious effort to reshape Japanese society in a way that dramatically affected the culture then in existence. It was a deliberate attempt by the US to change

Japan from an authoritarian, militaristic culture into one that was democratic and pacifist. They touched every level of society, from government, to schools, to religion, and media.

In contrast to Germany, the allied powers completely dismantled the German government and rebuilt from the ground up. In Japan, the US effectively co-opted the existing government. Though from one aspect, this appears as merely a practical use of the tools available, it also became a very effective cultural filter through which US policy was translated by the Japanese government into terms and forms that the Japanese people could understand. Whether it was a deliberate attempt to show cultural sensitivity to the Japanese people or simply an easier means of implementing policy is open for debate. The important lesson is that in the case of Japan it worked. Though there were many instances where government officials pushed back against what they saw as heavy-handedness or reforms that, in their opinion, cut too deep into Japanese culture, compromises were eventually reached in which the US often showed some level of accommodation toward Japanese culture, all while continually reminding the Japanese of who was ultimately in charge.

#### Comparison to the United States Occupation of Iraq

In discussing Iraq, it is not the intent to go into as much specific detail on what was done or not done by the US up to this point, for the occupation is ongoing and history is still being written. Rather, the approach will be to examine Iraqi culture as it exists today and discuss what can be applied from the US experience in Japan. Is the comparison valid? Further, when both Japan and Iraq are measured against the RAND study, what can be said about the necessity of cultural awareness in nation building?

Before parallels between the US occupations of Japan and Iraq can be inferred, the cultural makeup of Iraq today must be understood. Recalling the Hofstede analysis for Arab culture from chapter 2, Hofstede examined four of the five dimensions (LTO excluded) and came up with a very high PDI score and correspondingly low IDV score. MAS was close to the world average and significantly lower than the US score. UAI was also very strong in Arab culture. See figure 6 which displays data for the US, Japan, and the Arab World.

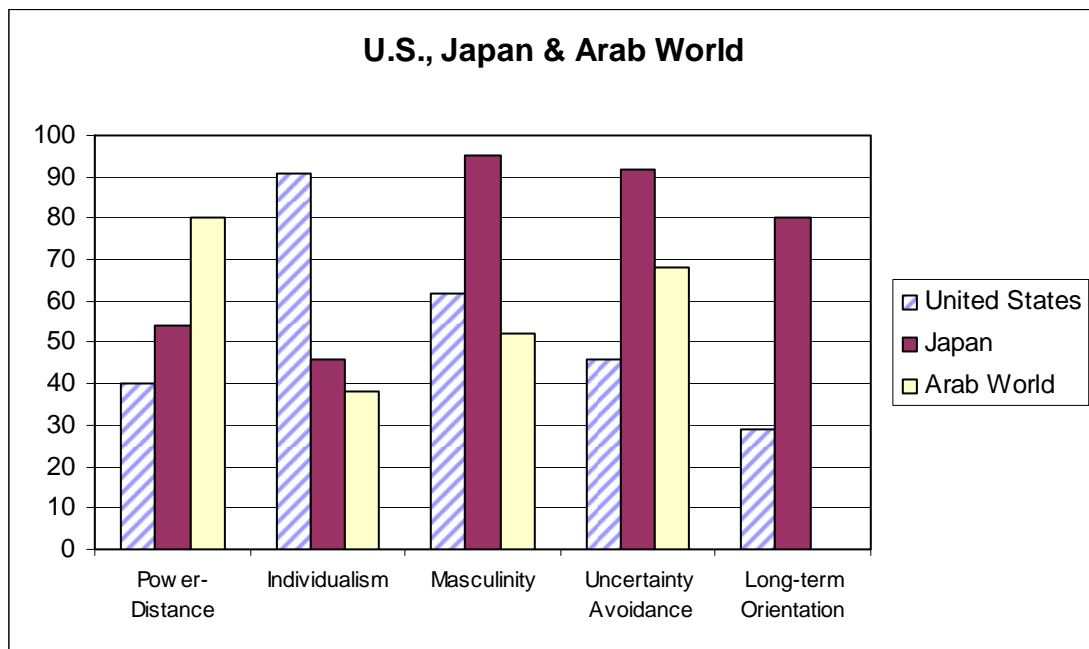


Figure 6. Hofstede Cultural Dimensions for United States, Japan and Arab World  
Source: Geert H. Hofstede, *Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Resources*; available from [http://www.geert-hofstede.com:80/geert\\_hofstede\\_resources.shtml](http://www.geert-hofstede.com:80/geert_hofstede_resources.shtml); Internet; accessed on 12 March 2007.

Hofstede found that the combination of high PDI and high UAI often correlate to a society with some form of caste system that restricts the ability of its member to change



their social status. Such societies have extensive laws and rules that attempt to minimize the amount of uncertainty in their lives. They also accept inequities in power and wealth distribution among their members. Another outgrowth of a strong score in these two categories is that leaders can achieve or are granted enormous power. Rules and laws are established that protect that power and leaders rise to their positions of dominance often through violence and not through democratic means. The population in these societies usually accepts this as normal and part of their culture (Hofstede 2007).

Chapter 2 illustrated many of the significant cultural differences between the US and Iraq. The categories of differing cultural norms (age, time consciousness, future orientation, and others) would have been different in post-World War II Japan than in Iraq, but the magnitude of the divide was likely similar. Both cultures are very distant from the US, but along different dimensions.

In contrast to Japan, RAND stated that the US should have been extremely well prepared to succeed at nation building in Iraq because of its extensive experience with Muslim cultures since the liberation of Kuwait. Since 1991, the US has liberated and or conducted nation building in seven nations, six of them Muslim: Kuwait, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and now Iraq (Dobbins et al. 2007, iii). This presents somewhat of a paradox when discussing culture in nation building. On the one hand, in Japan, where the vast majority of the US military had no cultural understanding of Japan nor background in nation building, the US was successful, whereas in Iraq, armed with extensive experience and cultural training, the US has had a negative experience. This begs the question of how or if one should compare the two.

### Is Japan a Valid Case for Comparison to Iraq?

It must be acknowledged that there are significant differences between what happened in Japan after World War II and the setting in Iraq today. Although this limits the ability to transfer many direct lessons from one to the other, there is still much that should be remembered and applied to Iraq.

For Japan, World War II started in 1931, with their occupation of Manchuria. Japan progressively expanded the Chinese territory under its control and in 1937 the capital, Nanking, fell to Japanese conquest. Fighting continued for another eight years until 1945, making for a total of fourteen years of war for the Japanese people (Chang 1997, 3-4). The nature of warfare and the limits of technology at the time produced a war of annihilation with enormous costs in lives and treasure on all sides. After so much loss, capped by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it is not difficult to imagine that many Japanese had simply had enough of all the years of war and sacrifice. It could be argued they were already pacified by the end through sheer exhaustion and would have willingly acquiesced to the demands of any occupier so long as the war could just be over.

Today, modern technology and tactics have enabled the US to advance the art of war to an unprecedented level of speed and precision while also minimizing civilian loss of life. Instead of years, conventional wars last only weeks and it is possible for a major portion of the civilian populace to remain relatively unaffected by the fighting going on around them. Instead of a long drawn-out campaign that attrits large numbers of able-bodied young men that could become potential insurgents, this pool of manpower remains when major hostilities cease. Further, insurgencies require some measure of

popular support to survive, support which is easier for civilians to provide that have not suffered through a costly war. In Japan, neither the manpower nor the will to resist was present as it was in Iraq at the conclusion of major combat operations.

At first this seems like a blow to the credibility of the foregoing study, but it can be argued that there is an important lesson that applies today as well. If the goal is not just to defeat a nation but to fundamentally change its culture, then the process, though possible, will take a long time. If one uses the war's start and not the end as the primary reference point, then comparing Japan to Iraq, four years into the US intervention in Iraq one is currently at early 1945. This means, all things being equal (which they obviously are not), it will take another seven years to pacify Iraq. This is based on using 1941 as the starting point and 1952 as the date when the US occupation of Japan officially ended for a total of eleven years of direct US involvement (Nishi 2004, 297).

As stated, the nature of war has changed since then, but that should not be reason to discount the lessons of World War II Japan. In both cases, changing the culture is fundamental to mission success. If one compare the time line, it may still be possible to succeed in Iraq on a comparable timeframe with that of Japan in World War II. The US must recognize, however, that the same metrics cannot be applied to both cases based on the end of major combat. The war in the Pacific, in addition to the US primary aim of defeating Japan, had the ultimate effect of preparing the Japanese people to accept defeat when it came, and made them more receptive to change imposed from the outside. It is questionable whether the past four years of insurgency and counterinsurgency in Iraq could really have been avoided. When transitioning between radically different forms of government, perhaps an extended period of significant violence is inevitable in order to

allow the populous to discover on its own that long-term aims will not be achieved through violence. Perhaps only then will the greater population be receptive to cultural change. By comparison, had the US possessed the ability to quickly conquer and occupy Japan in say, early 1942, it is doubtful the transition to peace and stability would have been as swift or as effective. In fact, RAND concluded this very thing by stating, “It seems that the more swift and bloodless the military victory, the more difficult post-conflict stabilization can be” (Dobbins et al. 2007, 162).

Another difference between Japan and Iraq is the different strategic setting for each. If one steps back to consider the broader Pacific theater, and not exclusively Japan, there were other forces that worked in favor of the US in executing a successful post-war policy. With Japan’s defeat, there was no other nation in the region that could have realistically taken on the task of filling the void left behind when Japan collapsed. Surrounding nations that had suffered under Japanese colonialism welcomed the US as freeing them from bondage and restoring peace and order to the region (Nishi 2004, 2). In contrast, with neighbors like Syria and Iran, it could be assumed any operation into Iraq would meet with at best, no support from surrounding nations, and at worst active subversion. The US was also committed to defeating and then occupying Japan from the earliest stages of conflict, whereas in Iraq occupation was never the goal, at least for any significant period.

Japan and Iraq both have very different ethnic compositions, a very significant factor in a comparison based on culture. Japan is ethnically very homogeneous. The physical territory of Japan also has a long, unified history unburdened by periods of colonialism with accompanying, arbitrary border divisions imposed by outside nations

across ethnic and religious groups (US Army Command and General Staff College 2005, 9). Iraq on the other hand has three major ethnic groups all vying for power: the Kurds in the north, Sunni Arabs in central Iraq, and Shiite Arabs in south-central Iraq. If left to themselves, the three groups may never have formed a single nation, but it was nonetheless forced upon them by colonial intervention. With that diverse make-up and long history of animosity between groups, it would seem logical to expect continued difficulty in pacifying such a region and getting the different sides to work together. Culture and ethnicity then becomes an easy scapegoat to explain the obstacles to progress. However, the answer is not so simple.

RAND asserted that homogeneity is in fact not a prerequisite for successful nation building, and cited Bosnia and Kosovo as examples. Ethnic hatred was as intense or greater in those regions as in any of the other conflicts considered, including Somalia, Haiti, and Afghanistan. There has been greater success in the former Yugoslavia due primarily to the level of effort expended by the US and other nations in those regions when compared to Afghanistan or Iraq. The allied countries involved in Kosovo have invested twenty-five times more money per capita there than in Afghanistan. In terms of per capita troop levels, the commitment was fifty times greater (Dobbins 2003, 161). A similar equation held true for the US occupations of Germany and Japan. RAND, therefore, concluded that the level of resources and time committed to an operation were more significant in producing a successful result than the ethnic make-up of the occupied nation.

Another distinction between the two occupations under consideration is the method used by the US to implement reform. RAND delineated between two basic

approaches to nation building, co-option versus deconstruction (Dobbins et al. 2007, xx). The former approach, which was used in Japan, is where the occupying force tries to implement change utilizing the existing government and infrastructure. The latter approach, employed in Iraq, involves eliminating the existing government and building up an entirely new entity. Co-option is obviously much less cumbersome for the occupying power and can be a very efficient means of exercising control and instituting reforms. As was previously discussed, this approach can also help the occupying nation to adapt its desired changes to the local culture by screening its actions through the host government and working together to achieve common goals. As long as the host government maintains legitimacy in the public's eyes, this approach also makes resistance more problematic for rebel groups since they would be resisting not only the US, but their own government as well. The hazard of co-option is that the necessary reforms may not be implemented fully if there is either covert or overt resistance from the host government. Deconstruction, while costly and time consuming, has the benefit of allowing the occupying force to start with a clean slate and form the government as it sees fit, though this too carries risk if the new government is not adequately adapted to the specific needs of the culture and people.

### Is Democracy Possible in Iraq?

Some pundits have postulated the theory that democracy may not be compatible with Iraqi culture, steeped as it is in authoritarianism, tribal rule, and power relationships. In a study conducted by Muller and Seligson (1994), the researchers tried to answer the question of whether cultural attitudes favorable to democracy can promote democracy in a given nation, or whether the existence of democracy simply promotes and reinforces

those attitudes. In other words, is it a one-way causation (attitudes lead to democracy), is it reciprocal or is there in fact no correlation at all. They cited the work of Inglehart in the late 1980s where he asserted that the strength of democratic governments is largely determined and influenced by cultural beliefs in the society such as the ability of the individual to influence the political process, a basic trust in fellow citizens and a general positive feeling about the government. Inglehart stated that cultures where these attitudes were prevalent were more likely to adopt or sustain democratic practices in their respective countries, and to do so over the long-term (Muller and Seligson 1994, 635).

Muller and Seligson studied multiple countries from Latin America and Europe during the 1970s and 1980s when significant democratic reforms swept through many countries in both regions. At the end of all the data, they concluded there was no causal relationship between attitudes of the public and the furtherance or restriction of democracy in these countries. Some with very positive attitudes toward democracy showed little or no change in the government during this time, while others with negative attitudes did. On the other hand, they found that some of the positive attitudes were more a product of democracy rather than a forerunner to it.

What they cite as the most important variable in promoting democracy was not a cultural attitude at all, but rather income inequality. Where there was great inequality in income distribution, there was a much greater likelihood of authoritarian rule, while the converse, egalitarian income distribution, correlated positively with democratic government. These results bode well for the future of Iraq, even if the culture is opposed to democracy, something that has not been established authoritatively. This is because even if one assumes Iraqi culture opposes democracy, Muller and Seligson's study

indicates it is still possible if the right reforms are implemented, regardless of cultural attitudes. Of course, one should not read too deeply into their results, for they do not assert causation between income equality and democratic government, but merely correlation. One cannot assume that taking income from the wealthy and distributing it to the poor will result in democracy. However, their conclusions that there was very little relationship between cultural attitudes and democratic government, falls into line with the RAND study which placed little emphasis on culture in nation building.

### Summary

The author has considered to this point the extensive reforms the US instituted in Japan in the post-war occupation and their relation to the US intervention in Iraq. These reforms encompassed every level of Japanese society and were implemented with the expressed intent to “spiritually disarm” the Japanese people (Moore and Robinson 2002, 9). The US came to change Japanese culture, to pacify it and turn Japan into a Western ally.

Though the US military was certainly not culturally aware, in many respects it apparently did not need to be, since it was able to co-opt the Japanese government into their plan for reform and use it as an effective tool to mold the new society step by step. Indeed, the RAND report cited the lack of qualified linguists and people with the necessary technical skill as a prime motivation for the retention of the existing government (Dobbins 2003, 52). It was in part an admission by the US that it severely lacked expertise in Japanese culture and therefore needed to rely on the Japanese government to translate US demands into action.



In Iraq, despite much greater emphasis on cultural awareness training and despite experience from multiple interventions in Muslim nations, the US has struggled to find success. As was the case with Japan, in Iraq the US confronts a culture very different from its own. It must find ways to bridge the gaps and establish a form of government that will be democratic, stable and pacified while at the same time accommodating it to the needs of the Iraqi people so that it can endure after the US leaves. The factors that distinguish Iraq from Japan, such as competing ethnic groups, interference by neighboring states, and the extremely different nature of war that preceded each occupation have all proved to be significant challenges for the US to succeed in Iraq. By comparison to Japan and other past efforts at nation building, it is still too early to say definitively what the outcome will be. RAND has shown that effective nation building is possible within societies that are culturally very distant from the occupiers and that it is, in fact, possible to transfer democratic principles of government to non-Western nations (Dobbins 2003, 51). Japan is perhaps an imperfect model for current operations in Iraq, but there is still much that can be learned from the experience.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This is precisely the challenge of American foreign policy in the twenty-first century. Impressive as never before, America's freedom to act has leapfrogged its ability to achieve. (2006)

Josef Joffe

[B]ear in mind that the government which they are establishing is designed not for our satisfaction or for the expression of our theoretical views, but for the happiness, peace, and prosperity of the people . . . and the measures adopted should be made to conform to their customs, their habits, and even their prejudices, to the fullest extent consistent with the accomplishment of the indispensable requisites of just and effective government. (Birtle 1998, 104)

Elihu Root, U.S. Secretary of War, 1901  
Reference to US occupation of the Philippines,

This thesis answers the question of whether the US is too culturally distant from Iraq to be successful in nation building there. It clarified how important cultural factors are in occupying and building a new nation in a society that is foreign to the occupiers. History has proved it is possible, as was the case with Japan. RAND was used as a null model for comparison. In several studies of nation building conducted by both the US and the UN, there was little emphasis on the study of culture and RAND concentrated on other factors instead that it deemed critical for success. This should not be interpreted to mean that the US can simply walk into an intervention oblivious to the culture and expect to succeed. Cultural study and awareness is still important in any operation, but what the RAND study seems to indicate is that it is perhaps of lesser importance at the strategic decision-making level. It asserted that certain fundamentals, such as establishing security and good governance, providing humanitarian relief, developing the economy, and

fostering democratization all translate universally across cultures. By RAND's estimate these represent the basic needs of all people everywhere and can be applied across cultural divides.

At the same time, however, RAND does acknowledge the importance of factoring culture into planning, and more importantly, into the execution of nation building.

Regarding military operations specifically, RAND stated:

Nation-building operations demand greater attention to civilian considerations—political, social, economic, and cultural factors in an area of operations—than do more conventional offensive and defensive operations....Cultural information is critical in gauging potential reactions to the operation, avoiding misunderstandings, and improving the operation's effectiveness. Changes in the behavior of the population may suggest a need to change tactics or strategy. Biographical information and leadership analysis help to improve understanding of adversaries, their methods of operation, and how they interact with their environment. Knowledge of the ethnic and religious factions in the area of operations and the historical background of the conflict is vital to mission success. (Dobbins et al. 2007, 21)

Any member of the military who has served in a peacekeeping or nation building role would testify to the truthfulness of the same. On the ground at the tactical level where Soldiers work directly with the civilians around them, a highly developed understanding of the culture can greatly enhance these interactions to the benefit of both occupier and occupied. The converse, cultural ignorance, can breed distrust and greatly slow the pace of progress.

The success of the US occupation of Japan is easily recognized today. The reforms implemented by the US after World War II fueled an enormous change in Japanese society that transformed it from an authoritarian, militaristic culture into a stable democracy that firmly renounces war. The roots of this cultural shift can not be definitively identified, but one of the common threads throughout the reforms of the

occupation is the empowering of the individual. If one recalls the Hofstede data from Chapter 2 regarding Japan, Japan today scores below the world average for IDV and far below the US. No comparable data is available from the World War II era, but it is probably safe to assume that Japanese culture was at least not more focused on the individual then than it is now. Japanese culture places primacy on the good of the group over that of the individual. This was perhaps most manifest during World War II with the use of the kamikaze who willingly sacrificed himself to further the cause of the whole society.

In Western culture, individual rights come before group rights. This is enshrined in the law where rights to liberty and property for individuals can even stand up against claims made by the government on those rights. This was not the case in World War II Japan where “order and social discipline were valued ahead of autonomy and individual expression” (Moore and Robinson 2002, 19). It is, therefore, a sensible question to ask whether a culture so focused on group rights at the expense of individuals was compatible with democratic government. Whether it was or not, the US occupation was clearly focused on altering the culture in favor of the individual. Whether it was the enfranchisement of women, encouraging student government and labor unions or the creation of a more egalitarian economic structure, each reform contributed to the promotion of individual rights and opportunities over the society as a whole. This must have been intentional to guide the culture closer toward the American view, believed to be most compatible with free, democratic government.

It would be fascinating to learn what the score for IDV in Japan would have been during the war and to compare it to today to determine what effect sixty years of

democracy have had on cultural perceptions. Hofstede lists average scores for all Asian countries in his survey, and it is interesting to note that IDV is much lower among other Asian countries than it is for Japan. Other Asian countries in the study that share similar religious beliefs include China, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Taiwan. Japan's IDV score is roughly twice the score of any of these other nations (Hofstede 2007). To what can this be attributed? Is it because Japan has lived under democracy since World War II while others of similar cultural-religious heritage have not? Japan is the most thoroughly democratic of the countries listed, and has been so for the greatest length of time. There are surely other variables at work along this dimension and many possible explanations, but it seems to be well within the realm of possibility to think the reforms instituted by the US contributed to this cultural shift in Japan that stands in such contrast to its neighbors today.

### What Can Be Applied From Past Experience?

#### Importance of Advance Planning

As was stated earlier, the US started planning for the occupation several years before Japan was defeated. This does not mean the US was imbued with greater foresight in 1943, than in 2003, to know that it would take an extraordinary amount of advanced planning for an occupation of this scale, with goals of such magnitude. The reality of warfare of the time dictated that the war would not be concluded quickly, and as a result, there was time to plan for the postwar period while the war was still underway. With advancements in warfare today, the US does not have the luxury of waiting until the battle is joined to plan for the postconflict phase. The tremendous speed of modern war demands that those decisions and planning be conducted well before combat commences.

In Iraq there seems to be wide agreement that the planning for post hostilities was inadequate and that the US was unprepared for anything less than its own perceived best-case scenario.

### Thoroughness of Reforms

In examining the depth and breadth, as well as speed of the US mandates for reform in Japan, it is striking. MacArthur did not operate under any implied limits driven by political correctness. He boldly demanded censorship of the textbooks then in use until new ones could be printed, directed an entirely new educational plan, tightly controlled the media, meddled with Japanese religious practice, and chipped away at the male domination in society. These changes were dictated to the Japanese government with little room for negotiation. What MacArthur said effectively became law. There was of course some molding and shaping of his dictates by the government to accommodate them to Japanese culture, but the bottom line was never negotiable, and he made sure to regularly remind the government and the people of that fact.

This approach differs sharply with Iraq, where the US has not taken such a strong-arm approach. An example has been the inability of the US to persuade the Iraqi government to definitively crack down on Shiite militia groups and their leaders, most prominent of which is Muqtada al Sadr. He has repeatedly been recognized by the US as a destabilizing force and has actively worked against the US agenda. His organization is suspected of numerous attacks and yet the Iraqi government has to this point avoided targeting him directly, against the wishes of the US (GlobalSecurity.org 2007). Such behavior would not have been tolerated in MacArthur's Japan. In many respects, today the US seems hesitant in implementing reform as it sees fit. There are logical reasons for

this attitude, chief among which is probably the way each war concluded. In Japan the US sought to conquer the nation and subdue it, and after doing so had virtually unlimited ability to dictate the terms of surrender. In Iraq, the goal was much more limited; essentially a decapitation strike to remove Saddam Hussein and his immediate followers. In Japan, the goal was to break the will of the people and drive acceptance of complete defeat down to the level of every citizen. Under the restrictions imposed by a limited objective in Iraq, removal of the top leaders, the US is then forced to acquiesce more to the sensitivities and wishes of the remaining government and is forced to negotiate over each desired reform. It is also doubtful whether the US today, in an age of global, instant media, could get away with such politically incorrect moves as controlling the media or interfering in any way with Iraqi religious practice. Heavy-handedness in education reform would also be decried as simply promoting US propaganda.

The reforms in Japan were begun rapidly and reached to the core of Japanese culture and society. Today perhaps part of the problem the US faces in Iraq is an inability to cut as deeply and to thoroughly reform Iraqi society as much as is necessary to effect lasting change.

### The Golden Hour

The immediate aftermath of hostilities often affords the opportunity for maximum progress if the intervening force can capitalize on the moment. The populace is naturally uncertain about its future and is perhaps the most receptive to change that it will ever be. RAND emphasizes the importance of being prepared to seize the moment and set the course for the future (Dobbins et al. 2007, xxiv). Failure to do so will make everything

that comes afterward much more difficult. This is not a new phenomenon as was seen in Japan.

The first six to eight months had the greatest impact on democratization. During this brief period, the authority of Japan's wartime rulers had reached its nadir and popular support for reform was at its pinnacle. In other words, in the heat of popular enthusiasm, conditions were ripe for reshaping the "substance" of traditional Japanese institutions under the hammer of SCAP fiat. After the first two years, however, countervailing forces emerged both within General Headquarters and within Japan's ruling establishment that muted many of the achievements of the early months, restoring some degree of continuity with prewar society. In general, the Occupation began on a very high note and then, after 1947, went steadily downhill. (Takemae et al. 2002, xliii)

After major combat is over and the country is occupied, the populace expects things to change in a big way. If the occupying force is not prepared with enough forces and enough planning to implement change quickly, society will eventually gravitate back to what it knows, its prewar state. The occupying force must come prepared to replace the old society with something new right away and seize that golden hour or face a long uphill struggle ever afterward, especially after they have worn out their welcome. In Iraq, the US' inadequate preparation for post-combat squandered much of the initial goodwill engendered by Saddam's removal.

### Time

As has been stated previously, one cannot overemphasize the importance of time in nation building. To transform a society from one way of government to something radically different simply can not happen overnight. As RAND stated several times, the most important criteria for success that it found was the level of commitment by the participating nations, whether it was the UN, the US, or some other lead nation or organization. That commitment is most easily measured in numbers of troops, money,



and time. The US did not officially end its occupation of Japan until 1952, and that was spurred on by the US involvement in the Korean War. Culture does not change quickly, but with steady, consistent pressure over time it can be done. The question is whether the political will of the US can withstand the timeline necessary to effect the change.

### United States May Not Always Get Everything It Wants

The occupation of Japan was not without its shortcomings. It will probably always be debated whether pardoning Emperor Hirohito was the correct decision to make. There were limited trials for war crimes in Japan as well, and as a result of both, many say Japanese society was never really forced to come to terms with their culpability for the war as well as the many atrocities that occurred under Japanese occupation.

[T]he decision to absolve the emperor in whose name the war was fought of all responsibility leaves the Japanese today somewhat less reconciled with their history, less ready to admit their war guilt, and consequently less reconciled with their neighbors than are the Germans. (Dobbins 2003, 53)

Germany in contrast was compelled to face up to all the harsh reality of what occurred during the war, and this war guilt permeates everything in German society and government to this day.

Was the decision to pardon the emperor driven by sensitivity to Japanese culture or was it in order to use him as a tool of the US to control the people and institute reform? It was probably some of both, and there are sound arguments for and against that decision. The point is that the occupying force cannot operate with complete disregard for the culture. To do so will cause the occupier to create new problems or miss opportunities to exploit the culture to its favor.

Finally, if one recall Huntington's quote from chapter 2 regarding the requirements for success, his final point was that "the dominant elements in the host civilization, in most cases the West, have to be willing to embrace the convert" (Huntington 2003, 139). The goal should not be to create a second America or a second, Western-style democracy. This new government must conform to the culture and society that lives there and so the occupying force must be ready to accept at least some compromises in establishing it, and concede that it will not be possible to achieve every goal.

### Things Are Not Always as Bad as They Seem

One of the major critiques of the US occupation in Iraq is the perceived lack of economic progress or even that it has grown worse since the invasion. As an example, Iraqi oil production at the end of 2006 was around 2.2 to 2.5 million barrels per day, compared with approximately 3 million barrels per day before the invasion (Fleming 2006). While this is an accurate depiction, apparent crises such as these often dim significantly with the passage of time. The Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe after World War II is hailed today as a stroke of genius, and a logical action to take in nation building. It met with significant resistance at the time and it was not until 1948, that Congress actually passed the plan, three years after the occupation began. It was Marshall's fear of an impending economic collapse in Germany during the course of the winter of 1947-1948 that finally gave impetus to the plan. The pace of economic recovery in Japan was extremely slow, first returning to pre-war levels a full eleven years after the war, in 1956 (Dobbins 2003, 160). Much of that history is unfortunately absent in discussions about Iraq today.

## Summary

The null hypothesis stated that cultural understanding is not a prerequisite for successful nation building. This has been affirmed at least in part. At the strategic level, this is the case in many respects. RAND laid out its key principles of nation building that appear to translate across cultures. Muller and Seligson showed that cultural attitudes regarding democracy apparently have little influence on whether democratic reform happens or not. Further, the US military was much more culturally prepared going into Iraq than it was in 1945 Japan, and yet the outcome so far has been nearly the opposite of what one would expect if one considers cultural awareness important in nation building.

And yet, things are really not that simple. The null hypothesis has also been disproved, in part, by citing evidence where cultural knowledge is, in fact, very necessary, mostly at the lower levels, though occasionally at the strategic level as well. If the US is able to co-opt the existing government, then its burden of cultural understanding is greatly reduced.

Nation building is an enormous responsibility that requires a major commitment of forces, money, and time if it is to succeed. It demands significant advanced planning that tailors operations to the people and culture of the target nation. There are multiple success stories in history, but just as many, if not more, failures. Each endeavor is unique and no single approach will be appropriate for every circumstance. Despite the many struggles of the US-led occupation of Iraq, there is real reason to believe that success is possible.

Nationbuilding is not principally about economic reconstruction; rather, it is about political transformation. The spread of democracy in Latin America, Asia, and parts of Africa suggests that this form of government is not unique to Western

culture or to advanced industrial economies: Democracy can, indeed, take root in circumstances where neither exists. (Dobbins 2003, xix)

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